Chronicles

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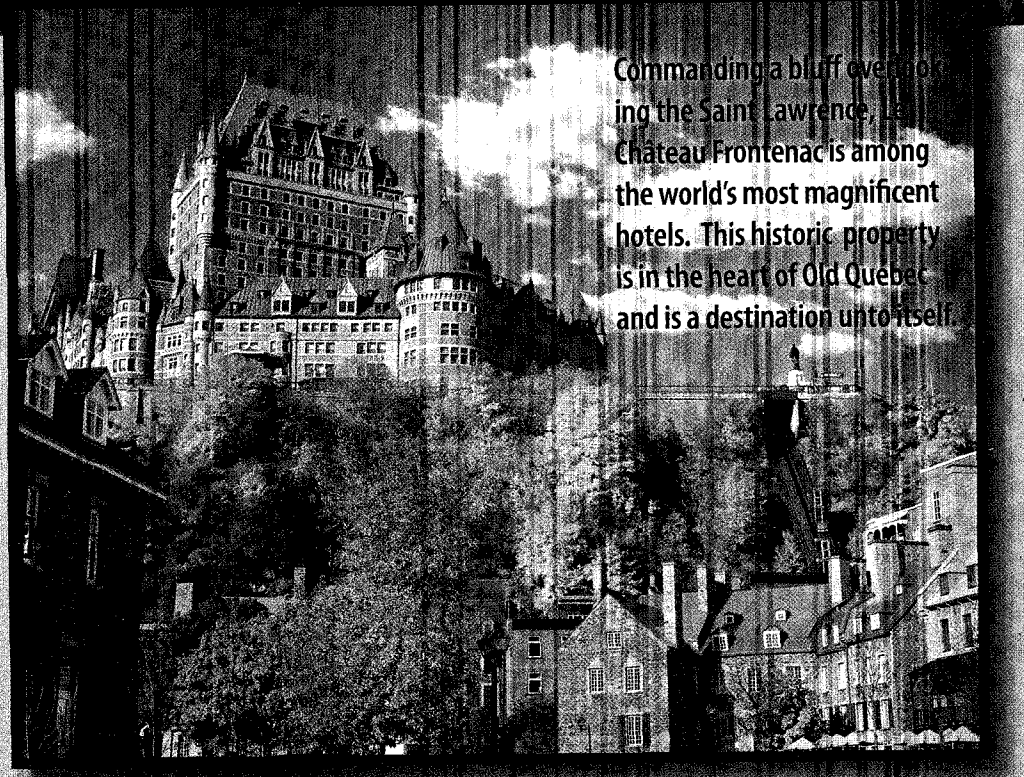

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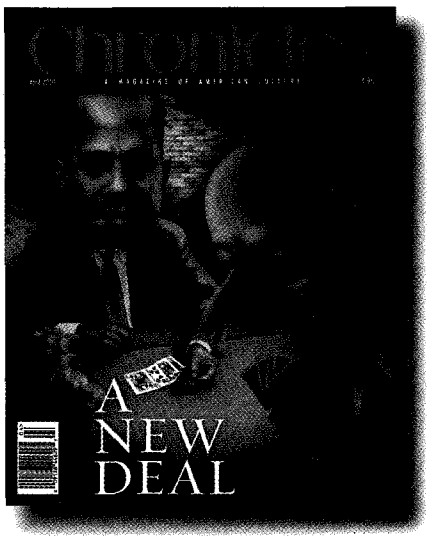

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Lincoln Herds

Abraham Lincoln is thrashed in a series of articles in the February issue of *Chronicles* ("The Legacy of Lincoln") as a man of low morality and character who took his actions for the worst of reasons—*e.g.*, to usher in an era of kleptocratic state capitalism; to bring an assembly of free state republics into a unitary, un-Christian federal system; to give Northern business interests untrammeled power over the South—all the while using hypocritical arguments against slavery while he personally was antiblack.

Paleoconservatives—like everyone else, including our current ruling elite—have a herd instinct dimming independent thought. Here's another view about Mr. Lincoln's time, which is much more germane: "With the Deep South gone, the United States would have lost a fourth of its territory, its window on the Caribbean and the Gulf, its border with Mexico, and its port of New Orleans—the outlet to the sea for the goods of Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, and the Middle West. The South would have begun to compete for the allegiance of New Mexico and Arizona . . . To Lincoln, secession meant an amputation of his country that would have destroyed its elan and morale. . . . Lincoln was the indispensable man who saved the Union."

These are the sentiments of Patrick J. Buchanan ("Mr. Lincoln's War: An Irrepressible Conflict?") in his *View* in the October 1997 issue of *Chronicles*.

—Michael Friedman
Stratford, CT

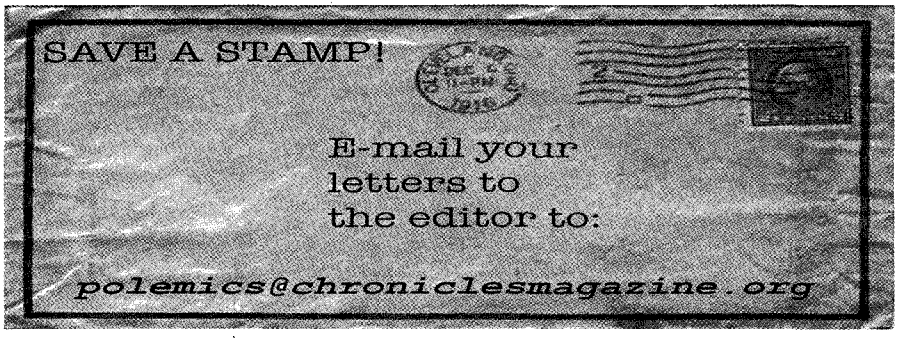
Had the views expressed in the February issue of *Chronicles* been published in 1863, the editors would have joined 13,553 others who had the temerity to question Lincoln's opinions and actions. (That number was only hinted at in Justin Raimondo's *View*, "Obama as Lincoln: Mask and Mirror.") Your presses would also have been destroyed by Union soldiers along with those of 300 other publishers. The canonization of Saint Abraham ignores such facts because he freed the slaves, although he had no constitutional authority to do so and didn't even try in Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri. Apologists for Lincoln ignore the fact that only five percent of Confederate soldiers were slaveholders. What were they fighting for? Freedom from Northern coercion.

—Fred H. Stout
Pacific, MO

The Editors Reply:

Upon receiving Mr. Friedman's letter, which stirred the mystic chords of memory, we thought it appropriate to post on our website the entire article to which he refers—all 9,632 words of it. (Our special thanks to Miss Nicole Kooistra for typing each of them in.)

Readers are welcomed to have a look at *ChroniclesMagazine.org*, to determine whether the 91 cited by Mr. Friedman paint the entire picture, and whether Mr. Buchanan would run with the mighty *Chronicles* herd Mr. Friedman describes in his first paragraph. Regardless, "though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection."



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by Justin Raimondo

The Return of the Neocons

The disastrous denouement of the Iraq war, and the revelation that we were lied into invading a country that represented no credible threat to us, had supposedly discredited the authors of that reckless adventure—the neoconservatives centered in and around the American Enterprise Institute. AEI served as the headquarters of the neocon network in Washington, a clearinghouse for everyone from Ben Wattenberg to Laurie Mylroie. Voicing at least two cheers for capitalism and opposition to the more obnoxious forms of political correctness, the neocons managed to convince the mainstream media and much of the GOP that they constituted the intellectual leadership of the conservative movement. Today, as the fragmentation of the right continues apace, that leadership is in question—and the movement has been pronounced dead several times over.

Out of power, the neocons are a pathetic lot. Absent the ear of a prince to whisper into, these counselors of constant war are disconnected from what is, for them, the source of life and sustenance: power. But never fear. Now that the Bush years have faded into an increasingly distant (albeit no less unpleasant) memory, there's a new crowd of neocons in town. Meet the left-neocons!

What's a left-neocon? Subtract at least one cheer for capitalism, put on a thick gloss of p.c.-think, and polish the hard-edged militarism of the unilateralist neocons with a more multilateral imperialism, and you've got the picture. This perspective is usually described, in Washington circles, as taking a "centrist" approach, but that center is a midpoint between Bill Kristol and Michèle Flournoy. Miss Flournoy is one of the cofounders of the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). If that sounds like the Democratic Party's version of Kristol's Project for a New American Century, that's because it is. She is also the new secretary of defense for policy, a post held by Douglas Feith when that office was the War Party's stronghold outside of the office of the vice president—a role it now seems destined to retain.

Flournoy coauthored a CNAS report advocating a very cautious and tentative withdrawal from Iraq, significantly rejecting the 16-month timetable promised by candidate Obama. Under the tutelage of "counterinsurgency" doctrine guru John Nagl, CNAS has become the center of agitation for an expanded war on the Afghan front—which promises to be Obama's Vietnam.

Nagl and his CNAS confrères advocate a full-bodied approach to counterinsurgency strategy, deploying not only military but political, economic, and diplomatic means to achieve our ostensible goals. I say "ostensible," because the exact goal of our *de facto* occupation of Afghanistan has never been clear, except to set the stage for serial revenge killings in retaliation for September 11. Yet the perpetrators of that deed are long gone from that country and may not even be hiding out in neighboring Pakistan, as Obama and his advisors constantly claim.

Be that as it may, the CNAS strategy for fighting the Afghan war is to nation-build with a vengeance: roads, schools, clinics, and agricultural programs to wean the Afghans away from poppy-growing, as well as full-scale political tutelage of the Afghan government, including picking and choosing the country's presidents.

You'll recall that Hamid Karzai, the stylish technocrat with a wardrobe by Gucci and about as much control over the Afghan countryside as his fashionista fan club, was elected in another purple-fingered triumph of democracy imposed at gunpoint. Well, now he's out—snubbed by Obama, who managed to invite the Afghan leader's likely rivals in the upcoming presidential election to his inauguration, but somehow failed to include Karzai's name on the guest list.

Another specimen of neoconism in Obama World is Dennis Ross, who has just been appointed special Middle East envoy, to balance out the choice of George Mitchell as special envoy charged with settling—or, at least, containing—the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ross is a hardliner who opposed significant concessions on the part of Israel, and whose record is hardly one of evenhandedness. What's more, he supported the war in Iraq and signed on to two of PNAC's open letters calling for an attack. He also serves as an advisor to United Against Nuclear Iran, a neocon front group agitating for a military confrontation with Tehran sooner rather than later.

As editorial director of *Antiwar.com*, I come into contact with a whole host of lefties, including starry-eyed (or is that zombified?) Obamaites who believe that our new President is about to inaugurate an era of peaceful cooperation and who reject the Bushian doctrine of perpetual war. Boy, are they in for the shock of their lives!

A recent *Wall Street Journal* profile of CNAS points to it as the source of a number of appointments to key foreign-policy posts in the Obama administration, while adding that "the center's budget comes mainly from foundations such as the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and it also gets some government money to study particular issues." Murdoch, Rockefeller; right-neocon, left-neocon; six of one, half a dozen of the other. When it comes to questions of war and peace, all indications are that the Obama administration is likely to pick up where the Bushies left off. CNAS, PNAC, or whatever four-letter acronym they cook up matters little in the end. Left-neocons and right-neocons are brothers under the skin.

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STIMULUS WINNERS AND LOSERS

The faltering economy is the major concern of most Americans. According to a recent AP poll, 47 percent of us are at least somewhat worried about losing our jobs, up from 28 percent one year ago. And 71 percent know a friend or relative who has lost his job within the past six months. Thus far, the Obama administration's response to these economic worries has been the $787 billion stimulus package, signed into law on February 17 as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Despite the grandiose title, there is little reason to believe that it will help the economy to recover from recession.

Even those who accept the controversial premises of Keynesian economics doubt the bill will do much. Economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman wrote on February 9 that, even before cuts were made in the stimulus package to win over Sens. Arlen Specter, Olympia Snowe, and Susan Collins—the only Republicans in either house to vote for it—"it wouldn't have been enough to fill the looming hole in the U.S. economy, which the Congressional Budget Office estimates will amount to $2.9 trillion over the next three years." Krugman also criticized the stimulus package as being "too heavily reliant on tax cuts." The bill's largest tax cut is a $116 billion payroll-tax credit, which will provide a credit of $400 per year per taxpayer, with only individuals earning under $75,000 per year, or joint filers earning under $150,000 per year, receiving the full amount. It is hard to see how a tax credit amounting to a little over a dollar a day will encourage a populace increasingly fearful of job loss to open its wallets and start spending again.

More importantly, this recession is revealing the systemic problems in the economy long analyzed in these pages by David Hartman and others, which Obama's stimulus package does little to address. As Kevin Kearns and Alan Tonelson of the U.S. Business and Industry Council argued before the stimulus package was passed, "Strategies emphasizing only repairing financial markets and restoring credit flows will simply re-create the house of cards, bubble economy that existed prior to the current crisis—in which America and its citizens borrowed and consumed until the bubble burst. . . . Unless the production and use of domestic goods is maximized in the economy, any federal stimulus programs could primarily reflate the over-borrowing and over-consumption cycle—without repairing the economy." The long decline of U.S. manufacturing, which accelerated during the Bush administration, has resulted in a situation in which "consuming, borrowing, inflating assets, and reshuffling paper wealth" have been treated as adequate substitutes for "creating genuine wealth by producing." Paul Craig Roberts is even more blunt: "The American economy has gone away. It is not coming back until free trade myths are buried six feet under."

There is, however, some dim recognition of these problems in the stimulus package. Despite Republican opposition and much angst at the *Wall Street Journal*, the stimulus package provides that, with certain exceptions, "None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act may be used for a project for the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of a public building or public work unless all of the iron, steel, and manufactured goods in the project are produced in the United States." Similarly, even though the bill failed to mandate the use of E-Verify to ensure that any jobs created would not go to illegal aliens, it did limit the use of H-1B visa holders by any entity receiving TARP funds, causing George Pieler and Jens Laurson of *Forbes.com* to liken this restriction to "protectionism" and wail that "The idea that native Americans . . . deserve special status in hiring is a deliberate slap in the face of globalization."

Unfortunately, it is only a small slap in the face of globalization, and the main purpose of the stimulus package seems to be to cement the allegiance of the liberals who flocked to Obama. Despite the media focus on the construction jobs the stimulus package is supposed to create, and Robert Reich's worry that too much government money will flow to "white male construction workers," the bill sets aside only $80.9 billion for infrastructure, as opposed to $147.7 billion for healthcare, including $86.6 billion for Medicaid reimbursements for the states, and $90.9 billion for education, of which $44.5 billion is earmarked for aid to local school districts. There are also massive subsidies to higher education, including $14 billion for an expanded college-tuition tax credit, $15.6 billion for an increase in Pell Grants, and $1.3 billion for university research facilities. What this money will achieve is uncertain, at best. Many are now beginning to question the value of a college education for most Americans. Charles Murray, author of *Real Education*, and I agree that for most Americans a college degree today is equivalent to a high-school diploma from a good public school in 1960—the major difference being that the former costs many tens of thousands of dollars, while the latter was free. What is certain is that the majority of those working in higher education and in our public schools are helping to indoctrinate the younger generation in the sort of leftism incarnated by Obama. The stimulus package also showers money on the environmentalist causes beloved of the upper-middle-class liberals who flocked to Obama, including $49.7 billion for a laundry list of mostly "green" energy projects.

The prototypical upper-middle-class liberal does quite well under Obama's stimulus package. The sort of clean, high-tech jobs preferred and performed by that class are all rewarded. In his address to Congress following the passage of the stimulus

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package, Obama stated that "Now is the time . . . to invest in areas like energy, health care, and education that will grow the economy." Not only do healthcare and education employ lots of technocrats, but they are largely shielded from economic reality by government, which explains why the cost of both has been outpacing inflation for many years. The ultimate winner under the stimulus package, though, is government itself. Indeed, Moody's has estimated that the economy in the D.C. metro area will grow by 2.5 percent from mid-2008 through mid-2010, while the rest of the economy shrinks. Unless we begin to address the systemic problems the current recession has exposed, it may be that the only Americans who will enjoy prosperity in years to come will be those who work for government or who work in those sectors of the economy connected to government.

—Tom Piatak

PICK YOURSELF UP

In his Inaugural Address, President Obama declared: "Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America." The President was paraphrasing Fred Astaire from the 1936 movie *Swingtime*. Fred and Ginger sang Jerome Kern's song "Pick Yourself Up," which begins, "Nothing's impossible I have found, / For when my chin is on the ground, / I pick myself up, dust myself off, / and start all over again."

Barack Obama should follow that advice when dealing with the so-called financial crisis. He should let the busted banks go, let the losses fall where they will, and start all over with new banks. Our big banks are so deeply insolvent—the figure *four trillion dollars* has been mentioned—that, practically speaking, they cannot be "stabilized" or bailed out. The sheer scale of the losses is too great; in the fourth quarter of 2008, Citigroup lost $100 million per day. Bank of America is not doing much better.

We have already spent half of the bailout money, and the banks are in worse shape than they were six months ago. The Federal Reserve has probably created as much new money as it can. The federal borrowing necessary to continue bailing out is probably well beyond what the rest of the world is willing to lend us. Most of the losses come from derivatives, the Doomsday Machine the banks invented in the 1990's with the encouragement of the Clinton administration. Derivatives are gambling contracts. Do you want to bet that Lehman Brothers will fail? Buy a derivative. For this reason, in 1999, Larry Summers, then Clinton's treasury secretary, immunized derivatives from state antigaming laws. Derivatives prospered; $684 trillion is now outstanding.

President Obama's economic advisors are the same group that, back in the Clinton days, put the country on the wrong track. At the Clinton Treasury, Larry Summers was the boss of Tim Geithner, Barack Obama's new treasury secretary. Summers, now the White House economic advisor, gives President Obama a daily economic-intelligence report. On January 25's *Meet the Press*, he refused to rule out the possibility that the White House would seek more money to save the banking system.

Treasury Secretary Geithner praised Congress for last September's $700 billion bailout bill: "[Y]our action helped prevent an economic crisis from becoming a catastrophe." At his confirmation hearing, he told the Senate that much more was needed: "Senators, the ultimate cost of this crisis will be greater if we do not act with sufficient strength now. In a crisis of this magnitude, the most prudent course is the most forceful course." Or maybe it isn't. Perhaps it's time to recognize that the bailout policy has failed.

The government, in any event, has no interest in seeing that gamblers are paid. On an insanity scale of 1 to 10, that is a 10. So, why not, as the song says, let the losses fall on those who earned them, dust ourselves off, and start all over again with new banks unencumbered by huge past liabilities?

Treasury Secretary Geithner has a character flaw on top of his consistently bad policy decisions: He tends to blame others for his errors. Did he fail to pay his taxes? No, his accountants did it. Did his rescue crew (including Paulson, Bernanke, and himself) make a huge mistake in letting Lehman Brothers go bankrupt? No, the rescue crew did not have the legal tools—it was Congress's fault: "[N]either the Department of Treasury, the executive branch nor the Federal Reserve had been given the authority by the Congress that would—may have made it possible for the government to put in capital on a scale necessary to avoid default. . . . That was a critical and tragic set of constraints. And this country should have never been in a position where we entered a crisis of this severity without an adequate set of tools to address failure by an institution that large and that consequential and that systematic."

This was major news since there had been no mention of any lack of legal tools at the time. Of course, two days before letting Lehman go, the rescuers had found the tools necessary to bail out Bear Stearns, and two days after, they found the tools necessary to bail out AIG. The AIG bailout was particularly galling since its only function was to allow AIG—a derivative seller—to pay off its losing bets in full. The rescue crew was always clear that they would do what they thought was financially necessary—whether it was legal or not.

The taxpayer doesn't need to pick up the banks' liabilities. President Obama should follow Fred and Ginger, not Larry and Tim.

—William J. Quirk

SU RANCHO ES MI RANCHO

Reading the newspapers, I wonder which straw will break the camel's back when it comes to illegal immigration. What will finally cause Americans to rise up and take back their country? The tenth family killed by an illegal-alien drunk driver? The 100th housewife butchered by an illegal-alien murderer? Or the next lawsuit that awards damages to illegal aliens

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after they have trespassed and vandalized a citizen's property?

It's happened again. Sixteen illegals, represented by the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund, sued rancher Roger Barnett in federal court for $32 million. In 2004, he collared the border jumpers and held them at gunpoint on his Cross Rail Ranch near Douglas, Arizona, until the Border Patrol arrived. One of them was a previously deported dope dealer. Since 1998, he has detained 12,000 for the Border Patrol. Illegals have trashed his property, killed livestock, stolen trucks, and even broken into his home. Because they kept wrecking an 8,000-gallon water tank, he installed a faucet so they could get something to drink.

Still, in February, the jury in the case awarded four of the plaintiffs a total of $78,000: $7,500 apiece for two of them because Barnett inflicted "emotional distress," $1,400 each for two more because of his "assault," and $60,000 in punitive damages. Barnett considers this an "80 percent victory" because he was not held liable on the most serious and ridiculous charges. His lawyers will appeal.

Barnett isn't the first victim of the leftist litigation lobby. In 2005, the Southern Poverty Law Center used the courts to steal Casey Nethercott's ranch because he, too, made the mistake of opposing the *Reconquista*.

As justly outraged as Americans are when they hear about these cases, what they don't seem to get is that MALDEF, the SPLC, and their army of plaintiffs are waging war against them. Lawyers for illegals are waging war to undermine immigration control and even the property rights of Americans who live along the border. The plaintiffs are waging war in the streets by driving drunk and murdering cops, husbands, wives, and even children. Turn on the History Channel's *Gangland* on any given night, and you're likely to see the gory, violent stories of illegal-immigrant gangs. And those gangs don't merely operate in major cities. MS-13, the Salvadoran gang, reached into Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, near the sleepy town of Woodstock, to murder a former member turned state's witness.

But back to the border. In 1999, Pat Buchanan visited 82-year-old rancher Theresa Murray in Douglas, Arizona, and described his visit this way: "Her ranch house was surrounded by a seven-foot chain-link fence that was topped with coils of razor wire. Every door and window had bars on it and was wired to an alarm. Mrs. Murray sleeps with a .32 caliber pistol on her head table, because she has been burglarized thirty times. Her guard dogs are dead; they bled to death when someone tossed meat containing chopped glass over her fence."

"Theresa Murray is living out her life inside a maximum security prison in her own home, in her own country," Buchanan wrote in *The Death of the West*, "because her government lacks the moral courage to do its duty and defend the borders of the United States of America."

Another rancher in Douglas, Richard Kozak, was forced to defend his home from illegal-alien drug smugglers. As the *Arizona Star* reported in 2004, Kozak finally fought back after watching them traverse his property for two years. They attacked his home, hitting it with more than 30 rounds of AK-47 and pistol fire, and then burned a trailer on his property.

These are not the stories MALDEF and the SPLC want Americans to hear. They tell the story differently. The illegals (or "undocumented immigrants," as they insist) are merely oppressed and beleaguered *campesinos* just passing through, hoping for a drink of water and perhaps a small meal in return for a ready smile. They are here, after all, to do the jobs Americans won't do.

Everyone with half a brain knows this isn't true. The judges know it. The juries know it. Even the SPLC and MALDEF know it. The question is, why do the judges and juries keep surrendering to the legalized theft these anti-American revolutionaries perpetrate? The answer is clear: white guilt created by the complete loss of loyalty to country, kith, and kin.

The "antiracist" meme running through liberal American Christianity tells us that we must not object to teaching children in foreign languages, must not oppose welfare and other public subsidies for illegals, and, ultimately, must not resist the invasion from the South. Until we realize that what we have is worth defending, we will continue to fall prey to the lie that being an American and a Christian means we must surrender our country to foreigners.

Even if a rancher "wins" in court, every lawsuit that he is forced to fight is a victory for our enemies. One day, Americans will awaken to a country in which the last battle is over. And they will have lost the war.

—R. Cort Kirkwood

ISRAEL'S COUNTERELITES

Conventional wisdom has it that the recent parliamentary election in Israel has swayed Israeli politics further to the political right. After all, the balance of power in the 120-member Knesset has shifted quite dramatically. The political bloc that included the centrist Kadima Party and Labor, which dominated the outgoing government in Jerusalem, was reduced from 70 seats in the last Knesset to 55 seats in the new one, while right, ultraright, and religious-right parties, led by Likud, won 65 seats, a gain of 15 seats.

Likud, headed by former Prime Minister Benjamin ("Bibi") Netanyahu, came in a close second behind Kadima, headed by Tzipi Livni. But with the Yisrael Beitenu Party of Avigdor Lieberman and the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party rallying behind Likud, the right-wing grouping had the clear majority in the Knesset, allowing it to form the next Israeli coalition and return Bibi to the prime minister's office.

Many pundits have suggested that the victorious parties on the political right have benefited from the rising nationalist sentiments among many Israelis who, in the aftermath of the recent war in Gaza, have concluded that the chances for reaching a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians are very slim and that the Jewish state needs to elect a government that

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would embrace a tough posture *vis-à-vis* the Arabs and Iran.

While these national-security considerations were critical in determining the outcome of the Israeli election, the recent electoral changes reflect a broader demographic transformation of Israeli politics. More specifically, they point to a continuing erosion in power of the Zionist Ashkenazi (Eastern European) elites that have dominated Israel since her founding in 1948, and the growing influence of what sociologists have described as the "counterelites," including the Mizrahim (Middle Eastern Jews), the Arab-Israeli citizens, and the more recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

For years, and especially since Israel occupied the Arab territories in the 1967 war, support for parties on the political right tended to come from the lower-middle-class and poor Mizrahim, while voters for the centrist and left-wing parties belonged to the upper-class social and economic strata—educated professionals of mostly Ashkenazi extraction who reside in the large urban centers in the Tel Aviv-Haifa corridor.

In general, the political and ideological division between the Israeli left and right has had very little to do with economic issues. Most Kadima and Labor voters tend to favor free-market policies—the sort of policies implemented in Israel by Netanyahu when he served as finance minister during the roaring globalization era of the 1990's, a time in which Israel went through a dramatic restructuring of her socialist economy. On the other hand, many of the Mizrahim who have backed Likud and Shas, and who reside in the poverty-stricken development towns of Israel, look to the government for economic assistance.

Put simply, much of what has been driving Israeli politics since 1967 comes from the political rift between Israeli Jews over Israel's foreign policy and, more specifically, over the fate of the occupied Arab territories. The right-wing parties have called for retaining Israeli control over the West Bank and Gaza, while the political left has advocated a diplomatic solution that would involve a territorial compromise under which Israel would cease to rule over the occupied Palestinian territories.

Sundry changes in Israel's national-security environment occasionally tip the balance. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process of the 1990's helped to bring Labor, led by the late Yitzhak Rabin, back into power, while the Second Intifada ended up producing the electoral victory of Likud, headed by Ariel Sharon. In fact, Kadima was formed in 2006 by Sharon and Israeli Labor leader Shimon Peres, along with other like-minded Likud and Labor politicians, as a centrist party committed to the idea of a two-state solution. The establishment of the new party seemed to signal the recognition among members of the old Zionist elites that Israel had no choice but to cede control of the occupied Palestinian territories in order to maintain her identity as a Jewish state.

But the failure to achieve an agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the rise of the radical Islamic Hamas movement, and the new violence between the two ethno-religious communities in Israel have been gradually weakening the influence of these old, moderate Ashkenazi and Zionist elites. Meanwhile, growing nationalist and religious radicalization on both sides, coupled with high birth-rates among the Mizrahim and the Arab-Israelis as well the large wave of about one millions immigrants from the former Soviet Union (including at least 200,000 non-Jews) have not only strengthened the electoral power of the counterelites but produced major divisions among them.

Hence, a large number of Arab-Israelis, who constitute more than 20 percent of the state, are challenging the Zionist and Jewish-exclusivist identify of Israel while embracing the anti-Israeli struggle with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, which explains why the Arab-Israeli political parties cannot join coalitions with Kadima and Labor. At the same time, with 15 seats in the Knesset, Yisrael Beitenu gets most of its support from Russian immigrants, many of whom hold strong anti-Arab views and want to deprive anti-Zionist Arabs of their citizenship, but who also tend to be very secular and demand a separation between religion and state. Shas, which enjoys the backing of ultra-Orthodox Mizrahim, opposes the ideological tenets of secular Zionism and wants to establish a full-fledged Iran-style Jewish theocracy in Israel.

U.S. policymakers who continue to daydream about working with what remains of the old political elites of Israel to help bring peace to the Holy Land need to recognize that both Kadima and Labor (and their political satellites) are losing influence in Israel, and that they will be replaced in a few years by new political forces who have contrasting visions about the future—none of which includes the idea of an Israeli-Palestinian peace.

—Leon Hadar

OBITER DICTA

Our poet this month is **David Middleton**, who is poet-in-residence, Distinguished Service Professor, Alcee Fortier Distinguished Professor, and head of the Department of Languages and Literature at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana. His books of verse include *The Burning Fields* (LSU Press, 1991), *As Far as Light Remains* (The Cummington Press, 1993), *Beyond the Chandeleurs* (LSU Press, 1999), and *The Habitual Peacefulness of Gruchy: Poems After Pictures by Jean-François Millet* (LSU Press, 2005).

Our cover art is provided by our interior artist, **George McCartney, Jr.** Mr. McCartney studied at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and received a bachelor's of art from the State University of New York at Geneseo. Since 1997, he has worked in various media in the fields of illustration, graphic design, and textiles. George resides in North Carolina with his wife, Kristin, and their children.

Our interior art is provided by **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson, our designer, received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

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by Thomas Fleming

Dead Romans and Live Americans

"*Libero Ingresso*" says the little sign on the doors of an Italian shop. English speakers who know enough Italian to translate the words, Free Entrance, sometimes wonder if there was a time when Italian shopkeepers charged customers an admission fee, to be refunded, perhaps, if a purchase was made. It is just the sort of thing you might expect of Old Europe. We Anglo-Saxons, after all, revealed the truths of free-market economics at a time when the rest of the world was groaning in the darkness of mercantilism and protectionism, when honest farmers and merchants paid taxes on their windows and might be forced to labor on their lord's land or the king's highway.

Alas, these speculations, so comforting to our Anglo-Saxon vanity, are dashed on the hard rock of linguistic reality. *Libero* (from the Latin *liber*) means "free" in the sense of unrestricted or open, not "free" in the sense of no payment required (for which the Italians still use the Latin *gratis*). French preserves the distinction between *liber* (French *libre*) and *gratuitus* (*gratuity*). In Spanish, *de gastos* ("of charge") is added to *libre* for things that cost no money; otherwise one might try to walk out of a bar without paying for a *Cuba libre*.

Romance languages have inherited something of Latin's precision. It is in English (and German) where the notions of liberty and costlessness are confused. I wonder how many of us, when we hear the terms *free market* and *free trade*, think initially of cost-free access to markets? When, as I have frequently done, I make the joke that there is no such thing as a free market, because there are always fees to be paid, I hardly ever get a response—neither a flicker of recognition nor a snicker of contempt. In fact, a free market is a market into which anyone can enter, and free trade is a trade between nations that cannot be forbidden or limited by national governments. The latter phrase is somewhat ambiguous, since governments often limit international trade by imposing tariffs. However, this ambiguity does not alter the fundamental fact that free markets and free trade are not, by definition, free of cost but (supposedly) free from coercion.

"Well, what difference does it make? This quibbling over the meaning of words is not going to help us out of the current economic crisis."

Possibly not, but it is hard to see that any useful set of solutions can be proposed if we deceive ourselves, and, in the world we live in, there is hardly a more pernicious form of deception than the misuse—deliberate or unintentional—of language. We have lived so long on the bad ideas that lie behind bad words that our minds have been poisoned and our very wills corrupted to the marrow of our being. Freedom for us is no longer viewed as a positive good, a moral and spiritual way of living that has been shaped by centuries of experience; it is now only the right to be perverse—to take drugs that make us stupid, to read nasty books that make us crazy, and to molest other people's children and kill our own. Kris Kristofferson probably intended no harm by his oft-quoted line, "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose," but he did succeed in encapsulating the servility of modern men and women for whom freedom means dependency, whether on a drug, a guru, or a social worker.

In every economic crisis, two sets of explanations—and solutions—are proposed. Republican "conservatives" (who used to be known as liberals) say that rogues in and out of government have distorted the market and robbed the nation, while Democratic "liberals" (who are basically Marxists) blame the Republican conservatives (who are really liberals) for refusing to regulate the marketplace, by which they mean the state should control and probably own the major industries and business sectors. For the liberals who are really Marxists, the answer is a second FDR—more regulation and a Newer Deal—while, for the conservatives who are really liberals, the solution is a second Reagan (lower taxes and deregulation). Unfortunately, too few of them are willing to balance tax cuts with budget cuts, without which our children and our children's children will be crippled by the debts run up by the Bush and Obama administrations.

The debate, in other words, is the same debate Americans have been having for nearly 150 years, an acrimonious dialogue between two sets of radicals: on the one hand, the philosophes and classical liberals who undermined society in the 18th and 19th centuries; on the other, the Marxists who used government to fill the void left by the liberal demolition of the traditional social institutions of family, class, and religion. Anyone who stands outside of the charmed circle of the Revolution is excluded from the conversation.

If we could dig up some old reactionary or prerevolutionary—a Samuel Johnson, or Walter Scott, or even, reaching back still further, a Cicero—what would such a man, supposing he had a comprehensive knowledge of

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what we have done in the past two centuries, say to us? Since we are dealing with practical affairs, let us summon the Roman statesman Cicero from his place in the pleasant suburb of Hell where he is forever chatting with Roman heroes and Greek philosophers.

After the initial "*Salve, Marce Tulli. Quid agis*?" I asked Cicero how he would have handled the U.S. economy.

"Economy? That is the art of managing a household, and, as I understand, you people apply it to theories of buying and selling. Your first mistake, it seems to me, lay in turning ideas into things. A good Roman would not do this; his language would not permit it. But you people are forever talking about history, as if it meant the events of the past (instead of the study of the past) or the geography of Europe as if it meant the actual places rather than a description of places. You even, I am told, worship an almighty dollar made out of mere paper. I wish we had thought of that one when we were raising money to fight against Mark Antony, but we knew even then that only a tyrant would degrade the currency."

"Excuse me, Marcus Tullius, but could we return to the question? I know you'd like to get back to your conversation with Scipio Africanus—"

"As I was saying, you people are always mistaking words and ideas for things and then, by treating what is unreal as if it were real, you cannot see the real. I heard what you were saying earlier, and you are perfectly correct, if a bit shallow, in questioning the meaning of that misleading phrase, the 'free market.' You people seem to think that there is some ultimate principle or universal law of nature you call The Market, when in fact there is no such thing. There is no Market, only markets. Markets are not ideas or mechanisms of exchange: They are places where people buy and sell things, and it hardly makes any difference whether the market in question is the *forum holitorium* in Rome, where vegetables were sold (you can find the ruins in several nearly derelict churches), or something like your New York Stock Exchange, where most of the orders are now placed through these computers you seem so proud of, though to me they seem like nothing more interesting than a gigantic abacus that enslaves the very people who pretend to be masters.

"Now the first thing to know about any market is that buyers and sellers almost always try to cheat each other. The sellers try to rig the weights and exaggerate the value of their product, while the buyers denigrate the product and spread ugly rumors in an effort to lower the price. What is more, the sellers tend to form combinations to keep the prices high, while the buyers make every effort to buy on credit or with degraded coinage. Cyrus the Persian despised the Greeks for their 'free-market' dishonesty, telling the Spartan herald, on the eve of the invasion, that he did not fear men who gathered together in a market to swear false oaths and cheat one another. He was wrong not to fear them, but not wrong about the cheating. If you people had read any history—as I know you have not—you would understand.

"The crooks you will always have with you. In my day I argued against crooked merchants who took advantage of shortages, famine, or public ignorance and charged exorbitant prices. You people, citing the proverb 'A fool and his money are soon parted,' celebrate the huckster who gets a corner on the market or exploits human suffering. That these things happen is inevitable, and it would probably do more harm than good to try to eliminate them, but to make a virtue out of vice is the sign of a diseased character.

"You people, not so long ago, entrusted your currency to the care of someone named Alan Greenspan, a convinced amoralist who might have stood in for Plato's Thrasymachus, if he were not so completely incoherent. Here is a guardian of your money supply and a watchdog over your markets, and yet he says that those who had 'looked to the self-interest of lending institutions to protect shareholder's equity (myself especially) are in a state of shocked disbelief.' I can only conclude the man is a liar or a fool. What sort of ruler could ever have been unwise enough to trust such a man? Does your country lack prisons and executioners for officials who cheat the republic and line the pockets of their friends and allies?

"If markets are neither ideas nor laws of nature, but playing fields on which every team is likely to cheat, they obviously need to be supervised. One thing I learned from my many years of working with the Roman knights [*editor's note: The* equites *or knights were the business class*], they always expected to take their biggest profits from cozy deals arranged by politicians: farming the taxes, mismanaging and looting the conquered provinces, taking contracts on building projects. I do not say they were bad men or that Rome could have dispensed with their services, but if you assumed they were lying, cheating, and stealing, you would usually be correct.

Naturally, the knights had many senators in their pockets, though the worst of the lot was probably Marcus Crassus, a patrician senator who found every imaginable way of making money. He formed a fire brigade, for example, and when a house was burning, he would buy it from the owner at a ridiculously low price and then call in his brigade to put the fire out. Who would prosecute a Crassus, when he had the jurymen in his pocket? But Crassus, at least, was a soldier and statesman descended from a line of orators and generals. How could you people allow yourselves to be fleeced by such obvious hucksters as Bernie Madoff and Ben Bernanke?

"The market can only be free where it is subjected to strict discipline. But how is that different from any other form of liberty? You people seem to think that liberty is a given and accept Epicurus' absurd argument—borrowed by your shallow imitators, Locke and Rousseau—that man once lived free in a state of nature. Has any of you ever met a 'natural' man? The more savage they are, the more they are enslaved to their appetites, to superstitious terror, and to the stronger men who lord it over them. No primitive man is free in the sense that a Roman or Spartan was free. My old friend Caesar, of course, said all men by nature are

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eager for freedom, but that was when he was conquering the poor barbarians and plotting to enslave Rome. Liberty is something you have to be willing to die for. No one can give it to you: It must be earned, day by day, by hard work and self-discipline.

"I have been reading over some of your liberal books and occasionally discuss the arguments with my old friend Cato and with some of the Greeks—though they are sometimes too clever for my poor head, made out of the hard oak of Arpinum. A Roman who came after me—decent fellow named Pliny, who served his prince well, though he was a bit hard on you Christians—pointed out that the kind of liberty described by people like Lord Acton and the Mills and Fitzjames Stephen has much in common with the ideals of a Roman or Athenian gentleman. It may be the worthiest idea you people—who have rejected your religion and your traditions—can entertain. But what you do not seem to understand is that liberty is an ideal that has to be striven for. It can never be taken for granted or given to the masses, because only the man who is morally free can ever enjoy political freedom. And, unless he is a Christian saint or a true Stoic, no one can be morally free unless he is possessed of sufficient wealth that he fears not the loss of a job or a plunge in the value of his investments. Yes, it is true, I am setting the bar a bit too high, but that is the only way I have of explaining to you barbarians—please forgive the slip—what we meant by liberty.

"You Americans, who boast so much of being free, what do you do the first time your pension funds take a tumble or your neighbor is thrown out of work? You elect an inexperienced numbskull and put your faith in him as a god, much as the Roman rabble were to put their faith in Caesar, though small good it did them. At least Caesar was a real Roman from ancient stock, a man of the highest intellect with a cultivated prose style, to say nothing of being a master politician and military genius, while your president . . . I will say no more. You have your god-emperor, and you had all better be praying that he be an Augustus, though I fear he will turn out to be more a Romulus Augustulus, the pawn of ruthless and unscrupulous foreigners.

"Advice? No, I have no advice for you, except perhaps this one thing. Do not deceive yourselves, as many Roman conservatives were wont to do in my day and in the early empire. You do not live in your old republic, and neither you nor your descendants ever will. If you are hardheaded and pragmatic, like my old pupil—Caesar's adopted son, Augustus—and his advisors, you may be able to preserve and even strengthen some of the institutions that shaped the republic. You might even rebuild a decent public-spirited aristocracy of men who put their country's interest almost on a level with their own—a type of man that has almost disappeared from your country. But do not throw your lives away on futile crusades against the tyranny you and your fathers have long since accepted. Helvidius Priscus came after my time, but what did he accomplish by attacking a decent emperor like Vespasian? Nothing but his own destruction. What I said of my friend Cato, I would also say of many of you conservatives. He acted as if he lived in Plato's Republic and not among the dregs of Romulus or should I say of Barry Obama. Please do not take this the wrong way, but you people make me happy to be a dead Roman and not a live American." ◁©▷

Two Chapters From a History of the Mind

by David Middleton

1. Milton Chooses a Cosmos

Though moved by all that Galileo saw
Through that elongate tube's distorting glass
Where reason left its rightful place and law
To wander with the wandering stars that pass
Into the dark they chart, I chose instead
Lights fixed in the arching heavens overhead.

For just as Satan raged above his place
And Adam asked the angel in his bower
For knowledge unrequired by love and grace,
Each ruled by pride and folly in its hour,
So now the mind, abstracted from its source
And wedded flesh, begins the long divorce.

Yet still, since I will never see the end
When blind by its own light pure mind will turn
Away from nightmare worlds its dreams portend,
I praise this centered earth men will discern
When mind with heart and soul once more is one
In this dark temple lit by moon and sun.

2. Enlightenment Mind

Released from myth and symbol, dreams of pope and king,
Set free at last to seize and break down everything
Caught by its own reflection it would wake to find
Itself apart in dark its broken lights defined.

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by Joseph Sobran

Scarlett and Michael

The other night, while watching *The Godfather* on television for roughly the 50th time, I was struck by a parallel that had never occurred to me before. The movie's sentimental musical score reminded me of "Tara's Theme" in *Gone With the Wind*. My mother used to whistle that melody all the time; she loved the book, the movie, and Scarlett O'Hara. I never quite grasped why *Gone With the Wind* had such a hold on her imagination until that moment. Then, in a flash, I saw.

Both films were enormously popular in their day and long afterward. Each embraced a somewhat disreputable side of American life with unexpected sympathy: the Sicilian mob, the slaveholding Southern Confederacy. And the two stories—comprising not only the films but also the novels they were based on—appeal strongly to the feeling that life was better in the old days, a lost era when heroic action was still possible and the individual was not yet dwarfed and crushed by the bureaucracy that goes by the name of Democracy.

Democracy? Face this simple fact: It is exceptional in modern times to deal with an elected official in person. You are far more likely to encounter, and to be visited at home by, an unelected official of the vast state bureaucracy whose mission is to enforce your compliance or collect your taxes, with no pretense of being your servant. Chattel slavery may be gone, but servitude to state bureaucracy seems to be an ineradicable feature of modern life. So we admire and envy those who don't have to truckle to it: Scarlett, Rhett, the Corleones.

The Princeton historian James McPherson ridicules *Gone With the Wind* for its nostalgic "moonlight and magnolias" picture of the Old South. He is dead wrong. Margaret Mitchell, author of the novel, belonged to a school of thought that rejected such an idealization of Dixie, and she projected this attitude onto her headstrong hero and heroine. Both Rhett Butler and Scarlett are skeptical of the Confederacy and its cult; no, not only skeptical of it, but cynical about it. They want to get on with life, not dwell in a supposedly glorious past. This means meeting the future on its own terms. They accept the new order of things after the war—Rhett skirting the law in order to prosper, Scarlett making a ruthlessly mercenary marriage to another man. They are a clear-eyed couple, far from idealistic. For both of them, the defeat of the South is a given; Rhett never had any illusion that victory was possible. He realized a distasteful truth: The Northern industrial power would dictate the outcome, never mind both sides' alleged principles.

In one of the film's most shocking scenes, Scarlett kills a Yankee soldier—a would-be rapist—who has invaded the family mansion. She shoots him in the face. This is our notice of her resolute intention to do whatever may be necessary to protect Tara. She is no longer the flirtatious belle we met at the beginning of the story. She has become a very bold and resourceful woman, equal to any challenge that may arise. Beauty and charm are only two of the weapons in her arsenal.

The Yankee-shooting incident has an answering scene in *The Godfather*, of course: when Michael Corleone guns down the gangster Virgil Sollozzo and police captain McCluskey during dinner in a restaurant in order to protect and avenge his father. Like Scarlett, Michael accepts the pitiless logic of a new order, in which old norms and scruples no longer obtain, and he adopts an audacity he thinks the times require. Killing a police officer is an extremely risky maneuver, but Michael judges it to be worth the gamble to destroy his family's enemies. He thereby proves he is not the effete Ivy League college boy his brother Santino assumes he is; and when Santino is murdered, Michael is ready to become head of the Corleone crime family, the new godfather. Just as Scarlett has repudiated the genteel code of the Old South, Michael abandons the vestiges of Vito Corleone's code of honor.

Santino, "Sonny," is an instinctual, reflexive fighter whose uncontrollable temper gets him baited into a trap and killed; but Michael is wiser, more cautious and deliberate. As the saying goes, he eats his revenge cold. After killing Sollozzo and McCluskey, he flees to Sicily, spending an idyllic year in his father's homeland and living by its ancient ways. Then, when his Sicilian bride is murdered, he is ready to come home and fight—to wage cold-blooded war on Vito's chief enemies. In a coup of Machiavellian cunning, he has most of them slain in a single day.

Both epics offer the exhilaration of showing us a world in which men are masters of their fates. This may be an illusion, but it remains an inspiring one. ©

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"It Takes Brass To Get Gold"

Politics and Economics in America

by Clyde Wilson

All things at Rome are for sale.

—Juvenal

Thomas Jefferson has left us an account of a supper-table conversation in the very earliest days of the U.S. government. Vice President John Adams (who was intended by nature for a preacher) declaimed at length about the virtues of the British government, which, he said, if purged of its corruption, would be perfection. Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton (a canny immigrant bastard with a Napoleon complex) differed sharply. It was its corruption, he avowed, that gave the British government its great stability and power. Add in Jefferson's views, which agreed with neither, and you anticipate almost the whole history of American political economy.

Adams and Hamilton were Federalists. They believed that in America the people could not be denied a role in government, however unwise that might be. The people, fortunately, were usually an inert mass, but they could become dangerous. They might discover that they could vote themselves the wealth of their betters. So things had to be arranged properly. The people could have their say in a Commons, but the government needed a powerful executive above the people to give it initiative and force. (With some justice Jefferson referred to the Federalists as "monarchy men." President Adams was obsessed with extravagant titles and ceremonies.) As Adams saw it, good government also required an upper house of senators (republican Lords), which had two essential benefits. It would give status and authority to the wealthy and powerful whose ambitions, as history showed, might otherwise undermine the republic. And it would provide a check on the expected rash actions of the people.

As the Jeffersonian philosopher John Taylor of Caroline pointed out, Adams, in a chimerical pursuit of checks and balances, was trying to create artificial orders where they did not exist.

Further, his vision, typical of his kind, mistook New England for the world, and he seemed ignorant of economics—the circulation of elites that would occur with a growing population settling a vast and nearly empty continent. Hamilton was right on the mark. If you wanted the wealth and power of society behind a strong government, you had to make it worth their while. You had to have a British-style public debt—in which wealth and power had an interest-bearing claim on government revenue. When Jefferson heard Hamilton declare that "a public debt is a public blessing," he knew he had spotted the serpent in Eden.

The strongest element in the push for a new and stronger federal government with a revenue not dependent on the states had come from the holders of the debts from the War of Independence. By 1789 this debt was not owned by those who had provided goods and services to the cause but by monied men, chiefly in New York and Philadelphia, who had bought it up at cents on the dollar while it was "not worth a Continental." The debt, of course, had to be paid. The centerpiece of Hamilton's initiative was to pay off the debt to its current holders, a number of them members of Congress, at face value in interest-bearing government bonds. Only in this manner could the "good faith and credit" of the government, which was said to be essential, be established. Thus would the wealthy and powerful be embraced in alliance with the government.

Jeffersonians were often quite intelligent and sophisticated men, but they did not seem to grasp the arcane mysteries of finance. In fact, to them it looked like a bit of a swindle. A public debt could at best be an onerous necessity in wartime. Who was going to pay that interest to the privileged minority who owned those government bonds? Where else could it come from but the pockets of good folks who actually produced something? It was no spur to prosperity. It merely created what Taylor called a "paper aristocracy," a class endowed by government with special privilege for which it contributed nothing in return. It reinstated the abuses that the American states had fought a war to be free of.

After all, most of the people were farmers—they produced something real out of the earth with their capital and labor, and supplied the overwhelming bulk of American exports that allowed trade with the world. The worthy merchant saw that the farmer's produce was sold and transported and that those things the farmer could not produce for himself were acquired in exchange. The

Clyde Wilson is editor of a new edition of the works of John Taylor of Caroline to be published by Alethes Press.

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professional man and artisan gave necessary services for which a just compensation was due. Even the manufacturer, when he asked no government bounty and provided goods that could not be found more cheaply elsewhere, played a useful role (though no free society could survive when dependent industrial workers became too numerous). But what exactly did the speculator do for his profits? Nothing except enjoy politically dictated privilege.

Taylor made a clear moral distinction between the producer and the speculator, whose occupation was to manipulate paper for the acquisition of wealth produced by other men. Economists will doubtless find this a naive idea, and libertarians will avow that the speculator is a legitimate contributor to the smooth workings of the free market. But it is a very basic question getting toward the proper nature of a good regime. Mr. David Hartman has pointed out in these pages that the "financial sector" has of late enjoyed a third of all corporate profits, and speculation is generally held responsible for our current perils. Could we learn anything useful for our present troubles by applying the distinction between producer and speculator?

Taylor argued at great length and in great depth that the whole Federalist case was based on a false understanding of society. The masses preying on the wealth of the classes was fairly infrequent in history. The masses were generally content merely to enjoy their modest own. The norm of history was that the classes preyed on the earnings of the masses. This was done either by force or by fraud—and the British/Hamiltonian public debt was the latest fad in frauds, covering up extortion by the mysteries of finance. The law bearing the names of Senator Glass of Virginia and Representative Steagall of Alabama—the repeal of which is said to have brought on the present debacle—was a faint echo of Jeffersonian perception.

The Jeffersonians asked some very fundamental questions that have had no hearing since Lincoln, about things that have long now been taken for granted as normal. Why should the government, which has an immense income of its own, have to borrow money and pay interest to private persons at all? (Of course, deficits were not expected to become ordinary.) The government might pay its expenses by issuing notes—redeemable promises to pay. These would not need to be made arbitrary legal tender because they rested on the government's credit. Furthermore, since they were sound, they could circulate as money, providing a convenience and fulfilling the constitutional requirement to regulate the currency. What did borrowing money from the rich in the form of interest-bearing bonds amount to except a guaranteed risk-free profit to certain well-connected interests? Throughout the 19th century, when Treasury notes were proposed, the bankers, with the customary Whig-Republican dishonest demagoguery, raised the cry that the people would be forced to use the government's money instead of the people's (*i.e.*, bankers') money. It was an unthinkable invasion of the people's rights!

The public debt was thus bound up with the question of banking and currency, as Hamilton well knew when he pushed for a "national" bank—actually a private corporation in which the government invested and to which the government delegated certain privileges. Until Lincoln, politicians argued *ad nauseam* about bank or no-bank, seldom touching the real question—that is, who would control the money supply. Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton quietly did something far more significant than establishing the national bank: He issued an executive order by which the government would accept as if they were gold the paper notes issued by private banks controlled by his friends and supporters.

Melanie Anderson

The love of it is the root of all evil, and yet the desire for it is nearly universal. More, money is a mystery. What is it? Where does it come from? Why does it increase or decrease in value? Banks, it seems, and government are somehow involved in the answers to these questions. I have been studying this subject as closely as I can for more than 20 years. I know enough to know that I do not understand it. I know enough to know that politicians and journalists haven't a clue, and enough to doubt that most economists understand it. It is possible that some financiers understand it, but why should they let us in on their immensely profitable knowledge?

And economic historians are the worst of all, since they generally repeat the deceptive party polemics of the past and don't have any idea what was really going on. For example, it is said that Andrew Jackson fought the national bank because he hated paper money and wanted a sound specie currency. Yes, that is what he thought he was doing. The Philadelphia national bank, though unconstitutional and a dangerous grant of power to private interests, actually kept the circulating paper of the country sound, an action which Martin Van Buren's bankers in New York and elsewhere felt cramped their style. Once the national bank was out of the way, they started loaning out paper notes with gay abandon. The original issuers of unbacked paper make a profit out of the air. As they circulate, the notes lose value. Why, then, don't depositors present their

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bad paper to the banks and demand specie, a puzzled Frédéric Bastiat asked the great pioneer American economist Condy Raguet? Because the depositors know that the banks will retaliate by cutting off their credit and calling in their loans. So, Jackson's ill-advised (and illegal and arbitrary) actions against the national bank resulted not in a hard-money economy but in destructive inflation.

The trouble with judging economic policies is that sequences are not always consequences. And the variables are many and large. The air is full of the claims of politicians that their virtues have caused prosperity or the errors of their rivals have harmed the people. And the claims of "experts" that their wisdom is responsible for good outcomes. Most of what passes for the public discussion of economic policy are irresponsibly ignorant assertions or self-serving lies. One might call the debate juvenile, if "childish" were not a more accurate label. Remember, we are talking here about that mysterious thing the love of which is universal and the root of all evil. As the old saying goes, "It takes brass to get gold." If you are good at it, swindling is a lot more profitable and fun than work.

What passes for the generally accepted history of American banking and currency, I am convinced, is as off-base as the account of Jackson and the Monster Bank. Greenbacks, legal tender, the gold/silver ratio, the Federal Reserve—these are all described in terms of deceptive party rhetoric, when the real question is, which set of scoundrels gets to work the game? True, the Federal Reserve is an atrocity, giving a private banking cartel the power to expand and contract the money supply, which means potential control of everything. But the Federal Reserve, truly conspiratorial and outrageous, is only a concentrated version of Lincoln's more dispersed national banking cartel. The essential issue is deeper. Who has the right to control the money supply and credit of our immense economy, and what should they rightly do with that power?

I agree with those folks who are eager to abolish the Federal Reserve. It is not going to happen. But if it did, what then? Do you think the bankers and speculators wouldn't have some other trick up their sleeves? My friends, you'd better give this some more thought. Jefferson and John Taylor will help.

With the third part of his program, direct subsidy of business and "protective" tariffs on imports to guarantee manufacturers a captive domestic market, Hamilton had less immediate success than with public debt and banking. But by the 1820's, agents of the Massachusetts and Pennsylvania industrialists were haunting the lobbies of the Capitol (hence *lobbyists*) to buy congressmen to vote "protection" (*i.e.*, import taxes to exclude their foreign competition and allow them to sell at the highest possible prices) for their "infant industries." Even Hamilton would have been shocked by the near 50-percent blanket tariffs of the Abomination Act of 1828 and the Morrill Act of 1861. A curious feature of tariff legislation was that, while "protection" was declared to be a great boon to all, certain items needed by the manufacturers that were not produced domestically were, by special provisions, exempted from import tax. It is estimated that iron and steel tariffs added $6,000 per mile to the cost of railroad construction in the 19th century. Is it any wonder that Rep. Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, who happened also to be an iron magnate, wanted a permanent Reconstruction that would keep the South forever without political power?

The case for tariff "protection" for American industry was and is based on the claim that it makes for national independence and self-sufficiency, and that it was responsible for American prosperity and high wages. The libertarians are right about this. How can forcing everyone to pay higher prices than necessary for what they buy be a cause of prosperity? Tariffs do not create wealth; they shift it around to make some people more prosperous. The great advance in wealth and industry in the United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries was a result of a hard-working, innovative population turned loose on a vast cornucopia of natural resources, not a product of tariff legislation cunningly crafted to benefit some at the expense of others. Indeed, the tariff probably slowed development.

Does that mean that we should give up on protecting American industry and labor and sing hosannas to what now is praised or blamed as "free trade"? No, because what we have now is as phony a version of free trade as Jackson's version of sound money. Adam Smith pointed out the general truth that free trade in goods between individuals of different countries, taking the benefit of comparative advantage, was good for his country and, indeed, for mankind in general. His country was a given, and free trade could be of more use to it than government meddling. Exchanging goods without interference was one thing. Selling off the country is something else. Neither Smith nor the antitariff Americans of the 19th century saw free trade as the international manipulation of money and labor-arbitrage that sacrifices citizens to foreigners for private profit (a modern version of the international slave trade). The speculators have taken their game into realms remote from the benefit of their country and her producers. They trade not in goods but in people, while they gamble on pieces of paper (or, rather, cyber entries).

Do real Americans have the right to protect our industry and our labor from an unprecedented type of predator in whatever way is best? Of course we do. But remember, when tariff protection was profitable to Northern capitalists and a loss to everyone else, the United States was a bastion of tariff protection. Now that so-called free trade is profitable to Northern capitalists and a burden to everyone else, the United States has "free trade." The question is not free trade or no free trade—it is who deals the cards and collects the pot. John Taylor, if he were here, could tell us, in his loquacious, humorous, colloquial veranda talk, that in arguing about surface issues put forward to disguise the depredations of the paper aristocracy, we are missing the point. ©

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Regulation for Financial Sanity

Government's Important (and Reduced) Role

by David A. Hartman

Melanie Anderson

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) just reported that U.S. banks lost money at a $100 billion annualized rate during the fourth quarter of 2008. Sounds grim, but it only describes the visible part of the iceberg our financial *Titanic* has hit. AIG, a giant insurance company, alone has been covered by the Federal Reserve for $150 billion in losses on derivatives on pools of subprime mortgages, with no end to its hemorrhaging in sight. According to the FDIC, as of the third quarter of 2008, a total of $13.6 trillion in assets, supported by $1.3 trillion of equity capital, was held by commercial banks in the United States. But derivatives (held primarily by four banks) totaled $177.1 trillion, or $136 for every dollar of capital. This massive amount of leverage means that a sneeze (such as derivatives of $2.5 trillion in subprime-mortgage pools) could give the banking system pneumonia. In fact, it did.

Granted, the banks holding these derivatives diligently "cover" their positions with offsetting derivatives, which are determined by complex econometric software on powerful computers designed to "assure" such coverage. This is the same sort of "assurance" that Long-Term Capital Management, Bear Stearns, and Lehman Brothers relied on. But the models failed to prevent unanticipated misbalances, and those companies, like AIG, went insolvent. How many possible mismatches could strike these four banks? And how could the Federal Reserve come to the rescue with $2.1 trillion of assets to be the backstop for $177.1 trillion in possible miscues?

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Given the complex use of credit default swaps as insurance on credit, the current amount of assets could serve as a reasonable backup for the $7.8 trillion of loans held by commercial banks, and perhaps even for two or three times that value in derivatives, but not for $23 of derivatives for each dollar of loans. At best, our banks are running a dangerous investment casino, and, at worst, they are engaged in pure speculation and insuring speculators, creating a bubble that eventually must burst.

In America today, the commercial banking system is every bit as vital as the electric or water utilities. It can be catastrophic to have to shut down the banks, as it was in 1933. Scores of companies were put out of business, and millions of workers were jobless by the time the banks were back in business. Recently, the threat of a speculation bubble lurked as the clearing and lending of the banking system nearly came to a stop.

The Federal Reserve is handing out money to banks deemed "too large to fail" without knowing how much funding will be required and how long it will take for them to be restored (or to fail). The regulators would be wise to consider the experience of the state of Texas, which went through a very severe recession, accompanied by a collapse of banking, in the 1980's. First oil and gas, then real estate, went through a "boom and bust." Central Texas alone went from 70 to 14 solvent banks. Most of our banks—from the three largest with multiple branches to small independents—went through a process of "revival of solvency." The regulators sought private "negative" bids for failing banks, based on an estimation of the franchise's current real value of assets (principally loans

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and fixed assets) and retainable deposits, as well as "goodwill" value. The lowest "negative bid" from an investor who was deemed capable of managing it, and who held the required amount of equity, bought the bank. The day the investor closed on the purchase, the bank was taken over, and, in most cases, operations continued seamlessly. When an insolvent bank required capital from the FDIC, whether to continue operations or because it found itself in a condition of "negative capital" at its sale, it had to terminate its principal executives, directors, and shareholders as if it were in bankruptcy, and void all indebtedness or claims other than deposits. Seized collateral went into a "bad bank," to be sold as markets recovered. Solvent banks were only subjected to the normal oversight of the regulators, and weak ones were put on notice that they must clean up their operations and balance sheets.

Our laws need to be strengthened in order to protect the public against the disproportionate and excessive removal of capital; exorbitant salaries, bonuses, and "perks" provided to executives as "compensation" for no real value added; and hidden conflicts of interest.

When it comes to the reorganization of banking, our goals should determine the means by which we attempt to attain them. Amar Bhidé proposes simple goals in a *BusinessWeek* article, "How Banking Diversification Steered Us Wrong":

> Here is my modest, quasi-libertarian proposal: To prevent future meltdowns, let's revive the radical idea of narrow commercial banking. Let's tightly limit bank activity to taking deposits and making loans—loans that bankers and regulators who aren't theoretical mathematicians can monitor. (Simple hedging to reduce the risks of making long-term loans with short-term deposits would be allowed.)
>
> Anyone else—investment banks, hedge funds, trusts—would be allowed to innovate and speculate, free of additional oversight. But they wouldn't be permitted to trade with or secure credit from regulated banks, except through prudent, well-secured loans. None of this would require new agencies or more regulators.

The simplicity of Mr. Bhidé's proposals is a breath of fresh air. Limit the role of commercial banks to accepting deposits and providing loans for personal and commercial needs. Use derivatives only if they are limited to hedging the bank's investments and loans. Regulators would serve as auditors of risk and the appropriate limits of risk and as custodians of deposits and prudence in loans and investments, seeing to it that banks exhibit transparency in proving their solvency. The history of financial institutions clearly demonstrates the necessity of this kind of regulation to assure citizens that their banking system is safe and sound.

If these are the goals, what are the means necessary to achieve them? We could start by eliminating holding companies, because there would be no "off balance sheet" investments allowed for banks, which means that the Federal Reserve would no longer have any reason to regulate banks. The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency should continue to be the auditor ensuring compliance with regulations regarding security, legality, and liquidity for banks' deposits, loans, investments, and capital. The FDIC should continue to issue "call reports" that provide detailed individual and group financial statements for all national and state banks, send warnings, and conduct changes of management and closure as necessary. Any investment bank, hedge fund, leasing company, REIT, or mutual fund listed on the stock exchanges would be answerable to the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC); others would be held accountable under blue-sky state laws. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac should be refinanced and made solvent, then auctioned along with the FHA to private investment bankers under the regulation of the SEC. Commercial banking should be allowed to deal with derivatives only as hedges for loans or investments held in-house. This simplification of commercial banking would reduce the number of "problem banks." The SEC should organize a "derivatives exchange" for public rating and transparency.

A recent *Cato Policy Report* features an article by David R. Henderson entitled "Are We Ailing From Too Much Deregulation?" His answer is no, and in support he cites the public savings that have resulted from "deregulation" of the airline and trucking industries. But neither industry has really been deregulated; in both cases, regulations have simply been *reduced*. Air- and highway-safety standards, which serve the public interest, are still enforced rigorously. Similarly, the banking regulations proposed here are necessary to ensure public safety; and while they, too, must be enforced rigorously, they amount to an overall reduction in government involvement in the U.S. banking system.

In light of the complex problems faced by investors today, the public needs a more vigorous SEC regulator. Fraud, conflicts of interest, and unbridled greed can only be restrained by transparent audits, attorneys who provide a check on privateers, and the enforcement of current law. The "bear raiders" of the early 20th century and the Great Depression were the predecessors of the hedge funds and private equity firms. Our laws need to be strengthened in order to protect the public against the disproportionate and excessive removal of capital; exorbitant salaries, bonuses, and "perks" provided to executives as "compensation" for no real value added; and hidden conflicts of interest. Stronger laws should demand that violators return all the capital they have stolen and face serious jail time.

At present, there is no telling just how serious the financial crisis will become. In a fleeting attempt to get us

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out of the crisis, the federal government is now spending trillions of dollars that it is confiscating from the American people—either directly, though onerous taxation, or indirectly, by inflating the currency, which robs today's citizens as well as their children and grandchildren. The only way out of the crisis is to get at its roots—as quickly and frugally as possible.

President Obama's budget seeks to "stimulate" the economy by handing out ill-considered welfare and the equivalents of earmarks—all financed by the world's worst federal deficit. This will only endanger the currency and hinder us from retaining and creating jobs. Similar handouts under George W. Bush did nothing to thwart the financial crisis. An effective increase in liquidity is only possible by making credit available to solvent companies, through the assistance of solvent banks. An argument could be made for federal funding for economically justifiable improvements to our infrastructure, but political handouts will only exacerbate our financial dilemma. The most important thing Washington could do to stimulate an economic recovery would be helping to restore frugal, solvent, old-fashioned commercial banking. If it did so, the markets would rise to the opportunity. ©

Foreseeing the Crisis

"The most recent FDIC *Quarterly Banking Profile*—fourth quarter, 1994—while cheerfully reviewing the condition of banking, made no mention of the Bank Insurance Fund's greatest danger: the staggering size and growth of off-balance derivatives as liabilities on money center banks.

"What risk do these derivatives pose to the Bank Insurance Fund? A study by the Group of Thirty, a Washington-based think tank, reported in 1993 that $6.25 trillion in derivatives contracts posed a potential default loss of $144 billion. The proportionate potential for loss posed by $15.8 trillion would be $364 billion—more than the total equity capital of all FDIC insured banks.

"It is time to recognize that banks that are heavily involved in underwriting derivatives and securities are merchant banks, not traditional commercial banks. My bank does not participate in their profits—nor do we want to underwrite their risks. Let such banks conduct such business as they wish and the government regulate them as it wishes. But they should not do so with the protection of FDIC or any other governmental insurance—including the notion that they are too big to fail.

"And, most particularly, such banks should not in any way be a liability of the Bank Insurance Fund, with my bank put at risk to pay the consequences."

—adapted from an article by David A. Hartman in Texas Independent Banker *(Spring 1995) regarding the dangers to commercial banks of derivatives held off the balance sheets*

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Not Our Fathers' Auto Industry

History *Versus* Economic Models

by Greg Kaza

The U.S. automotive industry operates in a highly regulated environment, a fact largely overlooked in recent congressional hearings over federal loan guarantees to domestic firms. These regulations affect more than three million American blue- and white-collar workers employed in the industry, along with shareholders and other investors, including retirees (and their spouses) vested in pension funds.

The industry's burden of regulation is explained to investors in corporate annual reports filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. General Motors, the largest publicly traded domestic automaker, is explicit in detailing the "risk factors" created by government regulation, as it explains in its 2008 10-K report: "We are affected significantly by a substantial amount of governmental regulations that increase costs related to the production of our vehicles. We anticipate that the number and extent of these regulations, and the costs to comply with them, will increase significantly in the future."

In looking back at the record of several decades of government standards for the auto industry, one trend that emerges is the tendency of Democratic-controlled Congresses and Republican presidents to increase the industry's regulatory burden. Among these onerous constraints are the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards. CAFE was passed in 1975 by a Democratic Congress and signed into law by Republican President Gerald R. Ford. GM's report specifically mentions that "the CAFE requirements mandated by the U.S. government pose special concerns."

CAFE requirements include mandates added in 2007 by another Democratic Congress and Republican President George W. Bush in the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA):

> In December 2007, the United States enacted the EISA, a new energy bill that will require significant increases in CAFE requirements applicable to cars and light trucks beginning in the 2011 model year in order to increase the combined U.S. fleet average for cars and light trucks to 35 mpg by 2020, a 40% increase. The estimated cost to the automotive industry of complying with this new standard will likely exceed $100 billion, and our compliance cost could require us to alter our capital spending and research and development plans, curtail sales of our higher margin vehicles, cease production of certain models or even exit certain segments of the vehicle market.

GM's report also describes burdensome regulation at the state level. California has led regulatory assaults on the auto industry, a trend that has escalated under Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger:

> In addition, a growing number of states are adopting regulations that establish CO_2 emission standards that effectively impose similarly increased fuel economy standards for new vehicles sold in those states. If stringent CO_2 emission standards are imposed on us on a state-by-state basis, the result could be even more disruptive to our business than the higher CAFE standards discussed above.

Ford, the second-largest domestic automaker, notes in its 2008 10-K:

> Many governmental standards and regulations relating to safety, fuel economy, emissions control, noise control, vehicle recycling, substances of concern, vehicle damage, and theft prevention are applicable to new motor vehicles, engines, and equipment manufactured for sale in the United States, Europe and elsewhere.

Annual reports filed by Chrysler while it was still a public company make the same point about government regulations. The smallest of the Big Three, it was acquired in 2007 by Cerberus Capital Management LP, a private firm.

These regulations are also troublesome for foreign producers. Toyota, the largest Japanese automaker, explains in its 2008 report that the company "has incurred, and expects to incur in the future, significant costs in complying with these regulations. New legislation or changes in existing legislation may also subject Toyota to additional expenses in the future."

Honda, the second-largest Japanese firm, notes:

> The automobile, motorcycle and power product

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> industries are subject to extensive environmental and other governmental regulation. Regulations regarding vehicle emission levels, fuel economy, noise and safety and noxious substances, as well as levels of pollutants from production plants, are extensive within the automobile, motorcycle and power product industries. These regulations are subject to change, and are often made more restrictive. The costs to comply with these regulations can be significant to Honda's operations.

One aim of this ever-growing list of government regulations is to force automakers to produce safer vehicles with fewer emissions. Another policy goal, as expressed by CAFE, is to reduce the nation's trade deficit by decreasing U.S. dependence on imported oil.

Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* (1965), which strongly criticized GM's Corvair and pollution in Southern California, is sometimes credited with launching the drive toward safer, cleaner cars. But automotive pioneers had advocated safety measures for decades. Joel W. Eastman's 1984 book *Styling Vs. Safety: The American Automobile Industry and the Development of Automotive Safety, 1900-1966* profiles Michigan plastic surgeon Dr. Claire L. Straith, an advocate for safety belts and padded dashboards. Automotive entrepreneur Preston Tucker took Straith's ideas seriously, although his vehicles never went into mass production. Safety belts were optional in vehicles produced by the Big Three (GM, Ford, Chrysler) and American Motors by the mid-1950's, and standard by the mid-1960's. Ford offered padded dashboards in a 1956 safety package. Consumer response was tepid, but this feature was widely accepted by the 1970's, and air bags followed. Since 1975, U.S. motor-vehicle deaths have ranged from 39,250 (1992) to 51,093 (1979), according to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) statistics.

The goal of lowering the U.S. trade deficit has not been achieved with CAFE's smaller, fuel-efficient vehicles. The U.S. goods and services deficit was $677.1 billion in 2008, according to the Census Bureau.

At present, two polar opposites define the parameters of the regulatory debate: the libertarian and socialist approaches. In general, libertarians reject government regulation of industry, while socialists call for state or worker control of the means of production. The libertarian approach was ascendant in the early decades of the 20th century when hundreds of U.S. automakers vied for consumers. These hundreds were reduced to a mere dozen by mid-century. Our fathers witnessed the industry's transformation into the Big Three oligopoly, with Chrysler's 1987 acquisition of American Motors as the final act. Auto executives complain about government regulations (former Chrysler President and CEO Lee Iacocca once termed it "the relentless lash"), but in the current crisis few legislators, including Republicans, are advancing even a quasilibertarian approach: a temporary freeze on current or pending regulations. Likewise, the socialist approach is merely a stopgap measure, not a credible, permanent solution in the eyes of most policymakers. George W. Bush provided emergency funding to the auto industry, and Barack Obama may buy preferred shares for Uncle Sam, but Washington is not about to launch an automotive IPO. European governments experimented with state ownership and ultimately rejected it. Few, save socialists, wish to be identified with the embarrassment of another Trabant.

The regulatory center oversaw our fathers' auto industry. Democrats proposed new regulations, and Republicans generally agreed (when they weren't expanding government on their own initiative). The Department of Transportation was created under Lyndon B. Johnson, signer of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act (1966). NHTSA, part of the Department of Transportation, was established as a separate unit under Richard M. Nixon. A December 1969 address at the Harvard Business School by Henry Ford II illustrates the industry's pragmatic acceptance of this centrist regulatory regime:

> The most effective way to encourage business to serve new public needs is to rely, when possible, on market incentives. The reduction of motor vehicle emissions is an excellent example of what I have in mind. Prior to the establishment of government emission standards, there was no market for emission control features. Although many people wanted cleaner air, individual customers would not have been willing to pay the extra cost of a low emission car because the benefits would have been imperceptible unless all customers were required to pay this cost. When the need for abatement of air pollution was recognized, the government established realistic emission standards. By doing so, the government created a market and the auto industry has moved quickly to supply it.

The auto industry is aware that "market changes [are] caused by shifts in consumer preferences," Ford explained. "Now we face a new phenomenon—market changes caused by legislation and regulation." Today, President Obama is proposing that the government stimulate a new "green" demand for the auto industry. This is a call from the same centrist playbook referenced by Ford.

Both the libertarian and the socialist extremes still influence regulatory policy in one key area: the realm of mergers and acquisitions, overseen by federal antitrust regulators. Any serious student of the business cycle and the Motor City understands that recessions catalyze consolidation within the industry. In the two years surrounding a single recession (July 1953 to August 1954) the following mergers and acquisitions occurred: Hudson and Nash-Kelvinator, creating American Motors; Kaiser and Willys-Overland; and Packard and Studebaker. This was the auto industry our fathers understood—a reality expressed by an old Chrysler annual report in a single sen-

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tence: "[T]he automotive industry historically has been highly cyclical and the duration of these cycles has been difficult to predict." That sentence is still misinterpreted by Wall Street MBAs, though it was comprehended by factory workers with high-school diplomas.

Our fathers who toiled for decades in auto plants knew these names: Auburn, Cord, Duesenberg, H.H. Franklin, Marmon, Pierce-Arrow, Ruxton, Stearns-Knight, Stutz—all casualties of the Great Depression (August 1929 to March 1933) and the Roosevelt Recession (May 1937 to June 1938). More recently, the Chrysler loan-guarantee drama occurred against the backdrop of two recessions (January to July 1980, and July 1981 to November 1982), and the firm's 1987 purchase of American Motors ("Little Four") helped Chrysler survive the recession that followed (July 1990 to March 1991). The auto industry's business model often proves terminal in recession. "The executives at GM, Ford and Chrysler have never been overly interested in long-range planning," Lee Iacocca explained in *Iacocca: An Autobiography* (1984). "They've been too concerned about expediency, improving the profits for the next quarter—and earning a good bonus." Men like Iacocca understood the cycle, and planned accordingly, which is how they survived recessions that occurred, on average, every four years between 1945 and 1982. I learned more about the cycle from my father, a 43-year Chrysler veteran, than I did from my graduate-school professors—save one, Harry C. Veryser (University of Detroit). Dad started as a skilled tradesman and ended his career as a production foreman, while Harry worked for his family's stampings business. Much knowledge has passed from the industry in the last quarter-century, a period marked by two brief eight-month recessions. The Big Three entered this recession with weak balance sheets, unrealistic sales forecasts, and bloated inventories. Detroit would be faring better if the Big Three had pooled their resources to hire a lone historian steeped in the business cycle's destructive nuances. Instead, management hires teams of economists who are forced to cut their estimates at the first hint of real trouble.

The historian can improve the incomplete portrait sketched by economists. Economists use four basic models to illustrate market competition: pure competition, monopolistic competition, oligopoly, and monopoly. All four were applicable to the automotive industry in the 20th century. One characteristic of pure competition is "ease of entry." Entry was so easy early in the century that thousands of small entrepreneurs, like Henry Ford, were building motor vehicles in garages. "Before 1905, 445 different makes of cars were being produced in 175 separate locations from New York to California," Walter Hayes wrote in his 1990 biography, *Henry: A Life of Henry Ford II*. "Yet by 1914," Hayes continued, "three-quarters of all vehicle production in America was based in Detroit, and Ford accounted for more than half."

In the 1920's, the automotive industry was characterized by monopolistic competition, a market with many producers without the power to control price. Dozens of firms produced automobiles in the Roaring Twenties, the decade in which General Motors overtook Ford in domestic market share. The brutal recessions of the 1930's narrowed the field in a Schumpeterian process of "creative destruction," and by decade's end the U.S. automotive industry was evolving into an oligopoly, characterized by "fewness." Historical analysis was central to Schumpeter's work, which explains why he is scorned by econometricians, who place their faith in mathematical models.

The industry resembled an oligopsony during World War II, with the Big Three selling materiel to various government entities—a fact that has been obscured in recent hearings. GM was the postwar price leader with a market share exceeding 40 percent in the 1950's, and 50 percent in the 1960's. Price leadership, another characteristic of oligopoly, means one firm is so strong that it influences the pricing decisions of others. GM was so strong in the 1960's that economists seriously debated whether its divisions (Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac) should be broken up in an antitrust action. The argument seems quaint today. GM's domestic market share is less than half its postwar peak, and the combined Big Three domestic share is lower than 50 percent.

Since the mid-1960's, government regulation of the auto industry has stayed in the center between the poles of libertarianism and socialism. If the center's recent actions fail to produce the desired results, an opportunity will be created for movement toward the poles. Noncentrist options would include a temporary freeze on some regulations and relaxed enforcement of antitrust law, which would allow the Big Three to merge into two smaller domestic firms, or one giant one. Democrats would favor an Employee Stock Ownership Plan and a federal-government stake in the new firm or firms, while Republicans would prefer bankruptcy (an unattractive option) or private equity.

Some economists will object to these measures, but historians can point to European examples in which both were employed around another recession (November 1973 to March 1975), one of the longest since the Depression. A Labor government nationalized British Leyland (Austin-Morris, Jaguar, and Leyland). French Conservatives brokered a merger between Citroen (which was in bankruptcy) and Peugeot. The Conservative Thatcher government later privatized Jaguar, while PSA Peugeot-Citroen is Europe's second-largest automaker. The models are less important than an historical understanding of the cycle.

The automotive enterprise that entered this recession is not our fathers' auto industry. The cycle, with its recurring pattern of death and rebirth, has always altered motor vehicles and those who build them. History and tradition help us understand and conserve the industry that three million American workers depend on, which is a better option than bankrupting it.

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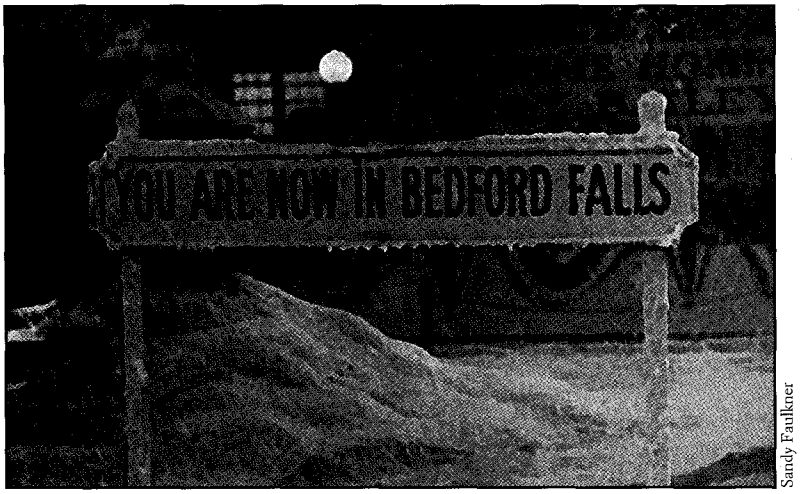
Ask an Entrepreneur

Where To Turn for Sound Economic Advice

by William Lutz



Sandy Faulkner

Want to learn how the economy really works? Don't go into academia. Get a job.

I spent six years of school filling my head with fancy theories and complicated mathematics, practiced under assumptions that often don't work in the real world. I earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree in economics, but where I really learned about the economy was from my job.

For the past decade, I have worked for David Hartman editing *The Lone Star Report*, a weekly policy newsletter that covers state government. An engineer by training with an M.B.A. from Harvard, Mr. Hartman has succeeded in a variety of vocations—banking, plastics, trucking. He has run real businesses and has a knack for numbers like few I have ever encountered. In many ways, Mr. Hartman is a stereotypical banker—conservative, thrifty. America used to produce thousands of self-made entrepreneurs like that.

When I first came to work for Mr. Hartman, Austin, Texas, was a boom town. Dot-coms were multiplying like flies, with many moving here from Silicon Valley because of the lower cost of living.

"This is a bubble," Mr. Hartman told me in 1999. "It won't last. These dot-coms produce nothing of value."

Sure enough, the bubble burst, and in the early part of this decade Austin contracted about as fast as it had expanded. It was the first of many Hartman predictions about the economy that later came true.

Mr. Hartman was talking about living on borrowed time and expressing concern about the long-term state of the U.S. economy back in the late 1990's, when almost everyone assumed the dollar was invincible and the stock market would rise in perpetuity. He knew better. Experience had taught him a number of important lessons that he passed on to me.

The economy grows when people make stuff. The current crisis was precipitated by financiers who tried to invent value by coming up with all sorts of computerized derivatives that only an investment banker (and not very many of them, apparently) could understand. But it was all funny money, the product of a series of paper transactions. With the Federal Reserve moving to expand the money supply, and financial institutions doling out loans with no real collateral, the lack of value led to the subprime mortgage crisis.

Banking provides an invaluable boost to the economy—when practiced honestly with sound underwriting standards. Lending adds value when it enables the private sector to make goods of value, such as homes, gasoline, and food.

Talk to Mr. Hartman for an hour, and you will probably hear him mention the decline of American manufacturing. Our manufacturing base helped the United States win two world wars. But our tax system is penalizing manufacturing and driving it abroad. According to statistics from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, as noted by Mr. Hartman in a report he delivered recently to a Texas Workforce Commission conference, the manufacturing share of U.S. Gross Domestic Product has declined from about 30 percent in the 1950's to less than 15 percent today.

William Lutz is managing editor of The Lone Star Report.

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That is why Mr. Hartman has devoted a substantial part of his life to promoting public policies that encourage the growth of American manufacturing.

When you tax wealth, you get less of it. Our tax system has killed the manufacturing base in this country.

The value-added taxes (VATs) adopted by European countries are border-adjustable. European governments add VATs to imports from America, which levels the playing field for their domestic manufacturers; exports, however, are not taxed.

Effectively, this amounts to a tax subsidy for European-manufactured goods and a tax penalty on American manufacturing. Europe has *de facto* tariffs as a result of VATs; since World War II, however, the United States has dramatically reduced her own tariffs.

Meanwhile, while Ireland and, to some extent, the rest of Europe have prospered, largely by cutting taxes on businesses and encouraging business to grow, the United States has some of the highest corporate taxation in the world. Here, both corporate profits and capital gains and dividends are taxed. This double taxation has provided U.S. corporations with an incentive to move offshore.

The net effect is that the U.S. market is very profitable for foreign companies, but not for U.S. manufacturers.

Mr. Hartman has proposed abolishing several U.S. business taxes and replacing them with a Business Transfer Tax that is border adjusted. Eliminating double-taxation of saving and investment would level the playing field for U.S. manufacturing.

Trade deficits matter. The decline of U.S. manufacturing is both a national-security problem and an economic problem. The former is perhaps easier to see, since most economists insist that trade deficits *don't* matter. But as Mr. Hartman said in a June 2005 presentation to the American Enterprise Institute,

> The relentless growth of the U.S. trade deficit has not provided evident beneficial investment of the resulting "foreign capital surplus." Virtually all foreign investment has been in existing rather than new productive assets, principally in support of their exports to the U.S. The U.S. trade deficit has been reflected in excessive consumption at the expense of U.S. personal saving for investment.

America has forgotten the lessons of the Great Depression. I remember being in a meeting with Mr. Hartman in the late 1990's in which he was absolutely outraged that Congress was repealing the Depression-era Glass-Steagall Act, which prohibited banks from selling insurance or investment products. Libertarian theorists, the business community, and the GOP all favored Glass-Steagall's repeal, but Mr. Hartman has been proved right by the current economic crisis.

When the banking system fails, everything else fails with it. In the 1920's, financial institutions took inappropriate risks, and the entire U.S. economy suffered. By separating banking from the rest of the financial markets, Glass-Steagall protected the economy. Now more than ever before, this sort of legislation is essential to the financial health of the nation. With the advent of computers and instant electronic transactions, a myriad of financial instruments threaten the security of the U.S. economy, unless they are kept in check by appropriate regulation.

When government gets too big, it chokes out the private sector, but the Depression showed that there is a legitimate role for the government to play in keeping the financial system honest and transparent.

A strong dollar is good for the U.S. economy. One of the ways the Federal Reserve has promoted liquidity is by weakening the U.S. dollar. In reviewing Barack Obama's economic plan in these pages ("The Revelations of the Obama Plan," *Views*, October 2008), Mr. Hartman wrote:

> Devaluing the dollar has not worked, because it inflates commodities and other costs and offers U.S. real estate, factories, and securities for sale at bargain-basement prices. Devaluation will reduce Americans to serfs under foreign landlords. The very process of devaluing the dollar through low interest rates that do not even offset inflation and devaluation results in inadequate savings to restore and update the manufacturing sector, as well as to supplement retirement income for the prudent.

Inheritance taxes are a disaster. Why is America ruled by publicly traded corporations instead of by individual entrepreneurs? A corporation is shielded from the effects of inheritance taxes. But the inheritance tax makes it very difficult for successful entrepreneurs to pass along the full benefits of their success to their heirs.

Large, multinational, publicly traded corporations have little accountability to the communities in which they are headquartered—or to anyone else. Corporate America is loyal to shareholders, not neighbors. Short-term profits are pursued no matter the cost to the community.

Have Wall Street executives been held accountable for their misdeeds? No. Washington is rewarding them with billions of dollars in taxpayer money.

Individual American entrepreneurs like Mr. Hartman are an important part of real American communities, and America was built on their ingenuity. Now they are becoming an endangered species.

Mr. Hartman's philosophy is simple, but it is hard to enact politically. It wrests power from the politicians and returns it to the people who made America the envy of the world. When it comes to guidance on how to fix our flagging economy, it would pay for Americans to turn to self-made men who know something about real value, instead of to the theorists and politicians who made the mess to begin with. ◈

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The Catalogue of Moons

by David Middleton

Algonquins of the Great Lakes gave them names,
Those moons that mark each season and the ways
Of earth and man, archaic nights and days
When likeness bound the heavens to the land:

The January Wolf Moon whose long howls
And prowling hunger drew near village fires,
Those Snow Moon drifts too deep for living game
Where hunters dug toward graves of frozen prey;

Crow Moons whose frosty caws thawed into spring,
Flakes crusting just to melt in maple sap,
The Moon of Sprouting Grass whose April blades
Would render up their pale green tenderness;

May's Flower Moon, its golden daisy face
So luminous as daisies fade with day;
Strawberry Moons soon rosy as their fruit
Now gathered in from June's late bearing glades;

Buck Moons of high July when antlers pushed
Through velvet fur in mantling summer rain;
Then August's Sturgeon Moon that crimson swims
Old lakes of night primeval and serene;

September's Harvest Moon whose pumpkins, corn,
And squash were all star-sown at equinox;
The Hunter's Moon where foraging reaped fields
Wild pigs grew plump for fall's thanksgiving feast;

November's Beaver Moon in whose bleak swamps
Before closed-winter icings traps were laid;
And then those Long Nights Moons, December's signs
By which wolves find their way toward Wolf Moon snow.

Such was the world of animal and man,
Of plant and weather held by metaphor
To all the kindred seasons of the moons
In which for centuries our being moved,

Though now each moon comes nameless into dark,
Its ancient cratered face vexed first by probes,
Then astronauts hopping across a waste
Of wonder spied by late Algonquin eyes

So far from where new lunacies ascend
When men find dusty rocks and great dry lakes
But no Man in the Moon who once had smiled
On sturgeon feeding deep in Lake Champlain.

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NATO at 60

A Hollow Shell

by Ted Galen Carpenter

When NATO marks its 60th birthday on April 4, there will be much celebration. Proponents will hail not only the alliance's longevity and past successes but its goals in the coming decades. Their optimism is based, in part, on statements by the new government in NATO's leading power, the United States. While the administration of George W. Bush sometimes seemed to favor a unilateral approach to foreign affairs, and occasionally exhibited barely concealed disdain for some of Washington's European allies (an attitude that was most evident regarding policy toward Iraq), President Barack Obama's foreign-policy team immediately emphasized its commitment to multilateralism, in general, and NATO, in particular. During her confirmation hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stressed that Washington wanted to strengthen all of its alliances, especially NATO.

In other circles, however, there is a growing uneasiness about NATO's relevance to the policy challenges of the 21st century and, indeed, about the organization's long-term viability. That uneasiness is entirely justified. The organization is, as they say in Texas, "all hat and no cattle." For, while NATO superficially remains an impressive organization, its ability to be an effective security mechanism is increasingly in doubt.

Expanding NATO to include new members on Russia's western frontier has both poisoned relations with Moscow and revealed major divisions in the ranks of the alliance about how to deal with Moscow. U.S. and Western European officials took advantage of Russia's economic and military disarray during the 1990's to establish a dominant position in Central and Eastern Europe. NATO proponents not only preserved a military institution whose primary purpose was to wage the Cold War against the Soviet Union in Europe but sought to expand the alliance eastward into Russia's traditional sphere of influence. That move violated a promise that the administration of President George H.W. Bush had made to Moscow in exchange for Kremlin acceptance of Germany's reunification and admission into NATO. The first round of NATO expansion (1998) involved the addition of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, over the Yeltsin government's objections. That expansion was relatively benign, though, compared with the second round (2004), which incorporated Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania—all former Soviet states.

Given the weakness of the country, a furious Russian political elite could do little except issue complaints. But that situation has changed, and Moscow has begun to push back. In particular, the Kremlin has emphasized that attempts to grant NATO membership to Ukraine and Georgia will not be tolerated.

Disagreement over Russia has created noticeable fissures within NATO. The NATO summit in Bucharest in spring 2008 produced a tepid decision on expanding the alliance. Opposition from Germany, France, and other key members thwarted Washington's goal of offering a Membership Action Plan (the first stage of preparing a country for admission to NATO) to Georgia and Ukraine. Several leading NATO powers argued that adding those countries to the alliance would needlessly provoke Russia and further damage the West's already tense relationship with Moscow. The summit communiqué offered only the vacuous promise that membership in the alliance remained open to all qualified democratic countries.

Intra-alliance divisions became even more evident in response to the Russia-Georgia war of August 2008. The Central and Eastern European members of NATO were alarmed at Russia's willingness to use force against a small neighbor, and they pressed their alliance partners to take a hard line toward Moscow. Most Western European members, though, favored a far more cautious approach, reminding their colleagues that the West needed Russia's cooperation on a variety of issues, including attempts to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions. Germany, France, and other countries also were aware of Moscow's ability to exploit Europe's dependence on Russian natural-gas supplies for diplomatic and political leverage. (Any doubts on that score evaporated in February 2009, when Russia's quarrel with Ukraine over the pricing of natural gas led to a virtual shutdown of the pipeline leading to Central and Western Europe.)

Washington's policy preferences were closer to the hardline position advocated by NATO's newer (East-

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ern European) members than they were to the views of America's traditional alliance partners. But the Western European governments, especially those in Germany and France, dug in their heels and refused to endorse confrontational proposals. In the end, NATO's response to Russia's coercion of Georgia amounted to little more than feeble diplomatic protests and a temporary suspension of meetings between NATO and Kremlin officials. We may anticipate further, and increasingly pointed, disagreements among alliance members regarding policy toward Russia.

While the leading European members of NATO prevented the offer of a Membership Action Plan to Ukraine and Georgia, eventual membership for two other countries, Croatia and Albania, did get a green light. A third Balkan country, Macedonia, would have received an invitation if not for an unresolved esoteric dispute between that country and Greece over the use of the name "Macedonia."

The proposed addition of Croatia and Albania highlights another example of NATO's waning relevance and increasingly dubious attributes in the post-Cold War era. That development is especially pertinent from the standpoint of America's security interests, given this country's obligations as leader of the alliance. Adding such members will do nothing to augment the vast military power of the United States or enhance the security of the American people. All a new round of enlargement will do is create another set of potential headaches for Washington.

NATO was once a serious alliance with a serious purpose. Throughout the Cold War, it prevented the Soviet Union from intimidating or attacking democratic Western Europe, a region of considerable strategic and economic importance. True, the United States was always the dominant player in the alliance, but Washington could count on credible secondary military powers, most notably Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Turkey.

But the new members the alliance has admitted since the end of the Cold War are weak client states that expect the United States to defend them. That was largely true of the first round of expansion, and it was even more evident in the second round. Such "allies" are security consumers, not security producers. From the standpoint of American interests, they are not assets but liabilities—and potentially very dangerous liabilities.

Taking on the obligation to defend the Baltic countries was especially unwise, because NATO now poses a direct geopolitical challenge to Russia right at Moscow's doorstep. Relations between Russia and her small Baltic neighbors are testy, to put it mildly. At the moment, Russia may be too weak to challenge the U.S./NATO security commitment to those countries, but that may not always be true. I only wish that the European powers who blocked the U.S. drive to add Georgia and Ukraine to NATO had shown the same wisdom when Washington pushed membership for the Baltic states.

The military capabilities of Croatia and Albania are minuscule. According to the 2008 edition of *The Military Balance*, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Croatia's military budget is a mere $875 million, and her military force consists of 17,660 active-duty personnel. Albania's budget is $208 million, and her force is 11,020. They will augment Estonia's $386 million and 4,100 troops, Latvia's $471 million and 5,969 troops, Lithuania's $470 million and 13,800 troops, and Slovenia's $750 million and 5,996 troops. By not offering membership to Macedonia, though, NATO will have to do without Skopje's $161 million and 10,890 troops.

Collectively, such members spend less on their militaries in one year than the United States spends in Iraq in ten days. How adding such military pygmies to NATO is supposed to enhance the security of the United States—or even that of the major Western European powers—is a mystery.

NATO is little more than a political fraternity. It generates numerous conferences, papers, and studies for a vast network of policymakers and outside experts who benefit from the perpetuation of its venerable bureaucracy. But as Gertrude Stein famously said of Oakland, "there is no there there."

In addition to being useless, these new allies are a potential embarrassment to the alliance, if not a danger. When Vice President Dick Cheney asserted during a visit to the Balkans in 2006 that such members would help "rejuvenate" NATO and rededicate the alliance to the values of freedom and democracy, he showed how out of touch with reality U.S. policy had become.

Croatia is just a few years removed from the fascistic regime of Franjo Tudjman and continues to have frosty relations with neighboring Serbia. Albania is a close ally of the new, predominantly Albanian state of Kosovo, an entity whose independence both Serbia and Russia do not recognize and vehemently oppose. In addition, Albania is notorious for being under the influence of organized crime. Indeed, the Albanian mafia is legendary throughout southeastern Europe, controlling the bulk of gambling, prostitution, and drug trafficking.

Efforts to add Ukraine and Georgia to the alliance would be even worse than the previous rounds of expansion. Ukraine's relationship with Russia is contentious. And, of course, last summer's war offers hints at Georgia's standing with Moscow. Rational Americans should have breathed a sigh of relief that Georgia was not a NATO member when that conflict erupted.

Most proponents of NATO's eastward expansion act as though the alliance is nothing but a political honor society. Their logic is that, because the nations of Eastern

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Europe have become capitalist democracies, they deserve to be members of the West's most prominent club. And because NATO is now primarily a political body, so the argument goes, Russia has no reason to fear or oppose its expansion—even to Russia's own border.

But as the Georgia episode should remind us, NATO is much more than a political club. It is still a military alliance with serious obligations, especially for the United States. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty proclaims that an attack on one member is an attack on all. That means the United States is obligated to defend every member, no matter how small, how militarily and economically insignificant, or how strategically exposed that member might be.

That comes perilously close to being a risky strategic bluff. The war between Russia and Georgia illustrates the hollow nature of NATO's ability to protect small, vulnerable members. True, Georgia was not a member of the alliance, so Article 5 did not apply. But the country was clearly a client, albeit an informal one, of the United States. U.S. leaders repeatedly hailed Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili as a friend and symbol of democratic reform in that part of the world. The conventional wisdom assumed that Russia would never molest such a client. Yet when Russian troops entered Georgia, the United States and the rest of NATO did little more than fuss and fume and offer postwar reconstruction aid to Tbilisi. Although some analysts expressed certainty that Russia would have been deterred had Georgia been a NATO member, there is reason to be skeptical about such bravado.

If Washington and its principal NATO partners endeavored to carry out their commitments under Article 5, they would risk an armed clash with a nuclear-armed great power. That degree of risk should never be incurred except in the defense of the most vital security interests, and the well-being of tiny nations on Russia's border doesn't even come close to meeting that requirement. In all likelihood, a U.S. president faced with the terrible potential consequences of confronting Russia militarily over such stakes would blink. And if the United States didn't act, the secondary NATO powers certainly would not. The alliance's nonresponse to Russia's offensive against Georgia suggested that the security expectations of NATO's new members and wannabe members are nothing more than an illusion.

Another indicator of NATO's impotence is the fraying and often feckless alliance mission in Afghanistan. Western leaders have repeatedly stated that Afghanistan is a key test of NATO's relevance and effectiveness in the 21st century.

Immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, NATO governments invoked Article 5 for the first time in the history of the alliance. U.S. leaders welcomed the European pledges of support, and the U.S.-led military campaign in Afghanistan soon had a key NATO component.

But early on, doubts began to arise concerning just how serious the European allies were about their military commitments. Indeed, most of the NATO governments seemed to view their troop deployments as personnel for humanitarian relief and nation-building missions rather than for combat operations. By and large, the military heavy lifting was left to U.S. forces and those of Canada, Britain, and a few other alliance members. In August 2003, NATO formally took command of the International Security Assistance Force, which the U.N. Security Council had authorized under a peace-enforcement mandate. As Cato Institute research fellow Stanley Kober notes, "ISAF has never seen itself as a war-fighting force." Rather, its goal was to "facilitate the reconstruction of Afghanistan."

In fact, with the exception of British, Canadian, and Dutch units, most of the NATO troop contributions amount to little more than military symbolism. The NATO governments can argue that they are contributing to the U.S.-led mission, but in reality most of the deployments are militarily useless—even with NATO troop levels in Afghanistan climbing over 30,000.

Most NATO members have placed a variety of restrictions on the use of their military personnel. Some forbid them from engaging in night operations, which are inherently more dangerous. Others prohibit their forces from being deployed in certain areas of the country—specifically, those areas where significant combat is taking place and where additional troops might actually prove useful.

Germany is one of the worst offenders in that regard. Berlin has kept its troops in the northern regions of Afghanistan, where hardly any fighting is taking place. Despite Washington's repeated requests, the German government has refused to lift that restriction. That might be just as well. A December 2008 German parliamentary report concluded that the country's troops in Afghanistan spent most of their time lounging around and drinking beer, and that many were now too fat and out of condition to be of any use in combat operations against the Taliban or Al Qaeda.

As America's NATO allies have postured and dithered in Afghanistan, the mission in that country has been badly frayed. Over the past three to four years, the Taliban and Al Qaeda have regained strength and launched ever more lethal attacks against U.S. and Afghan-government forces. If the mission in Afghanistan is truly a test of NATO's relevance and effectiveness, the alliance's performance deserves a failing grade.

NATO's feckless military performance in Afghanistan highlights a broader problem. Not only are most of the alliance's newer members marginal military players at best, but even our traditional European allies have allowed their defense establishments to decay. The gap between America's military capabilities and those of her European partners has grown into a chasm. U.S. military leaders warn that significant joint military operations with other NATO members have become increasingly difficult, and may soon become impossible.

That is not surprising. Besides those of Britain and France, the military budgets—to say nothing of crucial

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spending on force modernization—of the principal Western European powers have been in virtual free fall since the end of the Cold War. The spending and force levels of Germany, Italy, and Spain illustrate the problem. Spain devoted 1.85 percent of her gross domestic product to defense in 1989 and deployed more than 274,000 troops and 244 combat aircraft. By 2007, those figures were down to 0.73 percent of GDP, a mere 149,000 troops, and 197 aircraft. The plunge in spending and military capabilities for Italy has been equally dramatic. In 1989, the percentage of GDP spent on the military was 1.94, and Italy had nearly 390,000 troops and 425 combat aircraft. In 2007, the figures were 0.80 percent, 186,000 troops, and 267 aircraft.

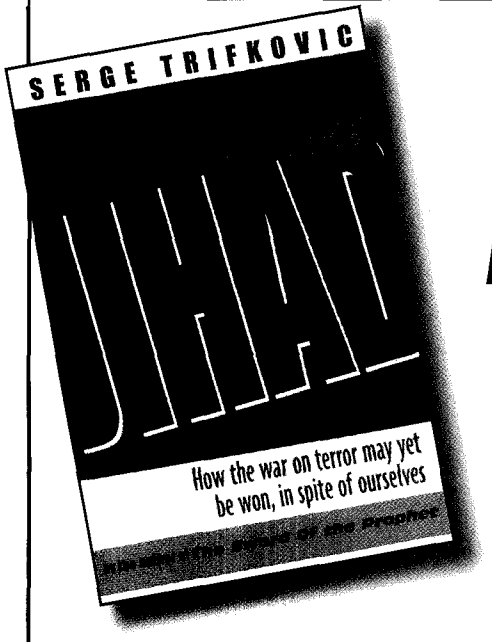
Berlin's decline in military spending and force levels is perhaps the most disheartening. Throughout the Cold War, West Germany was the front-line state and a crucial military partner in the containment of the Soviet Union. Berlin's military spending in 1989 was 2.27 percent of GDP, and the Bundeswehr had 469,000 military personnel and 621 combat aircraft. By 2007, spending had shrunk to 1.17 percent of GDP, and the active-duty force was down to fewer than 246,000 troops and 310 combat aircraft.

The slippage in Britain and France is also worrisome, although spending levels were higher to begin with and remain at marginally more respectable levels than those of Italy, Spain, and Germany. Yet Paris, which devoted a modest 2.98 percent of GDP to the military in 1989, and fielded 461,000 troops and 697 combat aircraft, is now spending only 1.94 percent of GDP, while force levels are only 255,000 troops and 316 aircraft. For Britain, the figures in 1989 were 3.98 percent, 306,000 troops, and 583 aircraft. In 2007, the figures were 2.17 percent, fewer than 181,000 troops, and only 354 aircraft. Even the vaunted British navy had shrunk from 206 vessels to 113.

In short, the principal European members of NATO have gone from countries that somewhat underinvested in defense during the Cold War to countries whose defense-spending levels now fail to meet even the straight-face test. It is no wonder that U.S. military leaders no longer consider most NATO allies to be credible partners for joint war-fighting scenarios.

All of these developments confirm that NATO is little more than a political fraternity. Its outward appearance is one of an impressive organization—with an abundance of perks for the military brass of member states. It generates numerous conferences, papers, and studies for a vast network of policymakers and outside experts who benefit from the perpetuation of its venerable bureaucracy. But as Gertrude Stein famously said of Oakland, "there is no there there." NATO is no longer an effective, or in most instances even a credible, security alliance. Certainly, NATO in its current form does not advance the security and well-being of the American republic. Someone should take the merciful step and put the alliance out of its misery. ©

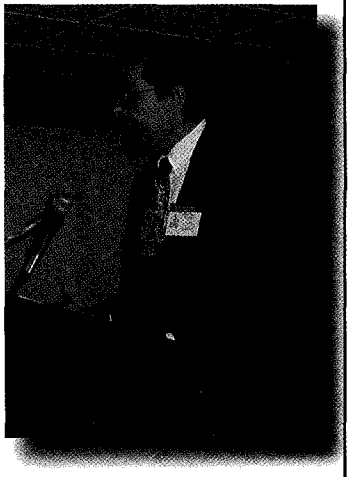
From the author of *The Sword of the Prophet*



*"The victory will come not by conquering Mecca for America but **by disengaging America from Mecca** and by excluding Mecca from America. Eliminating the risk is impossible. Managing it wisely, resolutely, and permanently is something attainable."*

Defeating Jihad

by Srdja Trifkovic



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by Taki Theodoracopulos

Our Expensive Crock

At times I think they have to be doing it on purpose. It's simply not possible that such density of stupidity exists on such a high level. Take Afghanistan, for example. Like a hellfire and brimstone preacher who cannot prize his eye off the pouting dolly bird in the front row, Obama seems mesmerized by his chief political advisor Rahm Emanuel, who, Iago-like, is whispering in his ear that more troops and more money can win it for the good guys in the land that has humiliated both the British and Soviet empires, and is saving its best for poor old Uncle Sam.

Emanuel has an agenda of his own—Israel's safety and all that—but that doesn't mean that the rest of us should take this folly lying down. What on earth is the aim of this futile, mad exercise? More troops in Afghanistan will not lead to the capture of Osama bin Laden; on the contrary, they will just kill more innocent Afghan people. The United States has no hope of subjugating the Afghanis. The only certainty is that some future American president will withdraw from that distant land.

Hamid Karzai has presided over an anemic and semilegitimate central government whose twin signatures have been corruption and ineptitude. Warlords predominate in the provinces, while opium production is flourishing. The Taliban is resurgent in Pakistan, and staggering reconstruction funds have been misspent or have fled the country because of the rampant lawlessness and unstable political climate.

These are the facts. The rest is just whistling Dixie, as they used to say in the good old days. Since the Afghanistan conflict has now lasted longer than World War II and shows no sign of resolution, it is reasonable for the American people to demand clarification from our venal leaders in Washington, D.C. The government fires back with the standard cliché, that we are there for "nation building." This is a crock. And patronizing as hell. And shows the arrogant ignorance of those who represent us. Afghanistan, more than most countries in the region, regards democracy as an alien and foolish cult. The country's basis is tribal, and the key figures are tribal leaders. If one was dumb enough to suggest to an Afghan that the vote of an 18-year-old should count as much as that of a 65-year-old tribal elder, he'd be told to visit a witch doctor in deep Africa. And if one was foolish enough to suggest that the vote of an 18-year-old girl should be of equal value with that of a tribal elder, decapitation would follow as surely as night follows day.

This, then, is the true situation on the ground. It is now too dangerous for aid workers to operate in half the country. The Taliban can commit assaults in Kabul itself at will. Civilian deaths are on the rise after seven years of "nation building." And while this is going on, Obama and his gang are talking about universal suffrage and democracy, both alien concepts to Afghans.

But let's go back a bit. Twenty years ago the Soviet legions left Afghanistan after a nine-year intervention that cost 15,000 young Soviet lives. We have been there almost as long, but instead of pulling out as the Soviets wisely decided to do, we are pouring more troops and money into that black hole. Like the Russkies, we are mostly occupying the cities, while the Taliban, Pashtun nationalists, and local tribal chiefs and mullahs control the countryside. Twenty years ago the Taliban did not exist, nor did suicide bombing in Afghanistan. The Afghan army and police were more effective, and Kabul was an oasis of calm. Today Western offices are hidden behind high walls and sandbags, and armored convoys are the only way nonlocals can get around. Yet the powers that be are telling us that more troops, more money, and more blood will bring eventual victory. This is not only a pipe dream, it is criminal—worse even than the Iraq debacle. The neocon ideology persists in Obamaland, the slimy ones having spread their poisoned tentacles throughout the nation's institutions.

When Moscow decided to invade, it was not looking for regime change. It was trying to prop up a regime under threat from a mounting civil war. This was shortly after the United States was expelled from Iran, and the Kremlin feared Washington wanted Afghanistan as a replacement. Getting out was easier for Moscow than it will be for Uncle Sam and NATO. The government that Moscow had installed lasted another three years after the Soviet withdrawal. Karzai will not last a day, if that.

So what is to be done? There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Karzai and his brood should be given safe conduct—they have tens of millions through the drug trade to keep them in style in, say, Las Vegas or the Bahamas. Then we should let the Afghanis figure it out for themselves. The Taliban are not popular, and if they try to rule, our present problem will become theirs. Pakistan will finally have to play a straight hand. We will be saving $70 billion per year, and thousands of American lives. The war is unwinnable. But is there one elected official in our midst who will get up in those disgraced houses in what we call the Capitol and say so? Is there no shame left in these United States?

The answer is very simple. There is no shame. ◁

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Scholarly Pornography

by Irving Louis Horowitz

"[T]he most heroic sentiments will lose their efficacy, and the most splendid ideas will drop their magnificence, if they are conveyed by words used commonly upon low and trivial occasions, debased by vulgar mouths, and contaminated by inelegant applications."
—Samuel Johnson

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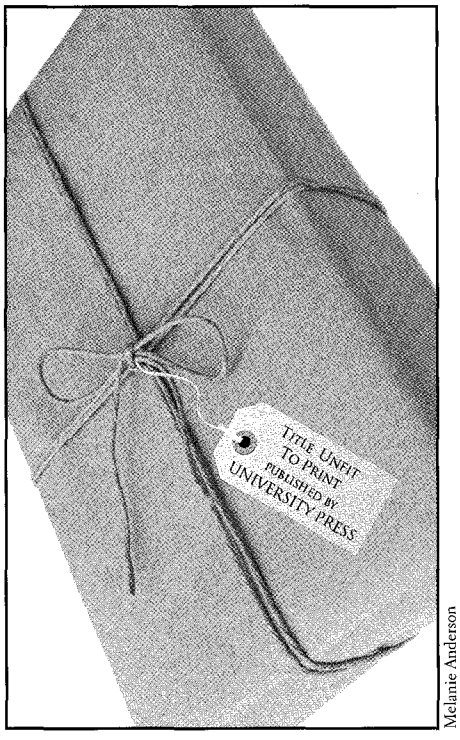
by Colin McGinn
Stocksfield, U.K.: Acumen Publishing Ltd.; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press; 76 pp., $12.95

On Bullsh-t
by Harry G. Frankfurt
Princeton: Princeton University Press; 80 pp., $9.98



Melanie Anderson

In January 2005, one of the premier scholarly publishers in the English language, Princeton University Press, published an 80-page pamphlet in book form called *On Bullsh-t,* by a well-respected philosopher, Harry G. Frankfurt, who had written widely on basic themes in epistemology. The titles of his previous works indicate the subject matter: *The Reasons of Love*, *The Importance of What We Care About*, and *On Truth*. The concerns addressed range far and wide in the history of philosophy, from Augustine to Wittgenstein, and do so with intelligence and appreciation.

On Bullsh-t received a wide variety of critical responses in reputable publications, ranging from "defining the essence of postindustrial society" (Scott McLemee) to "the humor and the naughtiness lie in the contrast between the highfalutin' and the indelicate" (Roger Kimball). For one critic the effort was a metaphor for the presidency of George W. Bush: "We are drowning in bullsh-t. I mean the Bush administration has practically made it a Cabinet position" (Dan Neill). It would take a strong will to make the counterclaim that we are not wallowing in humbug, or that our life and times are exempt from the history of hubris.

After 175 reviews of this monograph, the inevitable happened. One year later, Graham Edwards produced *The Business of Bullsh-t*, and Nick Webb offered up *The Dictionary of Bullsh-t*. Alas, although Professor Frankfurt's extended essay is a proper attempt to distinguish academic practice from professional principle, it ends up discarding the latter by casting a wide net of moral suspicion on the current status of learning as a whole.

What brought back such recollections of this recent success in university-press publishing is less Professor Frankfurt's monograph than the inevitable effort at imitation, not so much of the contents of that volume as the shock value of obscene language as a measure of the courage of the cowardly. We now have a new volume of philosophical discourse for the learned class, entitled *Mindf- - king*, which attempts to extend the boundaries of epistemology, or at least to demonstrate that the field is not the preserve of ancients and fossils, but can be practiced with ease by campus-dwelling freshmen. This work, by another professor of philosophy, Colin McGinn at the University of Miami, was first published by Acumen, a small house in the United Kingdom, then issued in Canada by McGill-Queen's University Press,

Irving Louis Horowitz is Hannah Arendt University Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Political Science at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. As his childhood memoir Daydreams and Nightmares: Reflections of a Harlem Childhood *(The University Presses of Mississippi, 1990) makes clear, he learned about the varied uses of language early in life.*

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a distinguished university press in its own right, and finally distributed in the United States by an equally venerable house, Cornell University Press.

This mimetic work seeks to investigate and clarify "modern techniques of thought control." To his credit, Professor McGinn acknowledges that "it was Harry Frankfurt's groundbreaking discussion of bullsh-t that promoted me to undertake a similar enquiry into a related (but distinct) concept: the concept of mindf--king." He assembles the conceptual components of this most complex of concepts: trust, deception, emotion, manipulation, false belief, and vulnerability. And as a display of one-upmanship, philosophy itself is seen as

> a type of mindf--k. A vast litany of psychological characteristics, from jealousy, disorientation, insecurity, and prejudices, are adduced as an aid in this mindf--k. The result is delusion and even insanity.

So this book can be viewed as a protection against insanity. Again, in 76 pages, with the aid of a keen apparatus drawn from the history of philosophy, we are urged to use expletives as therapy.

The promotional effort for this work offers a plain guide to the perplexed.

> Being surrounded by bullsh-t is one thing. Having your mind f--ked is quite another. The former is irritating, but the latter is violating and intrusive, unless you give your consent. If someone manipulates your thoughts and emotions, messing with your head, you naturally feel resentment: he or she has distorted your perceptions, disturbed your feelings, maybe even usurped your self. Mindf--king is a prevalent aspect of contemporary culture and the agent can range from an individual to a whole state, from personal mind games to wholesale propaganda.

Just where the line is to be drawn between education and manipulation remains the mystery in this appeal to natural goodness and perfection. But this is a secondary concern that Professor McGinn can work out more directly with Professor Frankfurt. Indeed, for all I know, he may well have done so already.

The use of coarse language introduces serious issues in ethical theory, which is certainly a strong part of the history of philosophy. It also expands the limits of taste for presumably the most elevated segment of publishing. Such large questions merit attention: Does criticism of language condemn the critic to being an old fogey or, worse, an old fart? Does the use of such expletives add to our knowledge of the subject matter of the field, or aid in studying Kant or Wittgenstein? Are we better able to avoid "mental manipulation" by employing such expletives? Or put in reverse order, does the removal or censorship of such "curse words" detract in any way from the subject matter at hand? And finally, do the university presses publishing these works extend such tough street rhetoric to include criticism of all the popular myths and ideologies of the time, or is a line drawn ruling issues of race, sex, and class off limits? More pointedly, does the new freedom in expletives open up new vistas of analysis, or does it effectively seal off such areas in favor of cheap linguistic thrills? It comes to pass that large issues of liberty and license are very much part of drawing the line either between or after bullsh-t and mindf--king.

I will leave it to the professional philosopher to respond to these multifaceted queries and will simply address the issue of the appropriateness of these volumes for university-press publishers. If these books are part of the discourse on basic issues in the history and status of philosophy, will the language used in the titles promote the larger concerns of civil discourse? If this unique community of roughly 100 publishers in North America fails to address this question, then it seems perfectly within the bounds of good judgment to question whether the university press will stand for anything distinct from any other segment of the publishing community. Beyond that, what is the connection between the university press and the university community as a whole? Is the latter simply an extension of the social nexus, without special norms or responsibilities?

More pointedly, if university presses, in their perfectly reasonable desire to survive and expand their sphere of influence, both within the field of higher learning and in the mass society, must resort to pornographic language, pure and simple, to sell their wares, what distinguishes them from commercial presses? It is hardly a secret that the margins of profitability in university-press publishing are so narrow that they often require subventions from general university funds. Even the mere ten percent of university presses that are relatively sound in fiscal terms are expected to contribute to the general welfare of the universities in which they coexist—or at least not draw from general funds.

The problem is not only the implications of efforts to sell to a market through the use of shocking terms, but the potential impact on core curricula. Will professors be advised to juice up their course offerings? Are we to suggest that, instead of calling a course topic "sexual behavior," we substitute the terms "f--king interaction?" More pointedly, is the classroom to become a vehicle for self-examination or just plain exhibitionism and experimentation? By the same token, if a student is to find himself in disagreement with the professor, is the proper comment, "Sir, you are a bullsh-tter" (to the roars of the fellow students), or "Are you a mindf--ker?" Does such language become the end-all and be-all of discursive behavior among students and teachers, or, for that matter, teachers and administrators?

I suspect that the uses of such rhetoric, far from having a liberating impact, in fact serve to curb dissent and discussion of serious issues. Those who carry weapons of grading or sheer physical intimidation, hardly an unknown property in college and university life,

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will be granted a license to employ precisely the instrument of emotivism, in general, and cursing, in particular, as a means to quiet dissent or constrain opposition. The use of such rhetoric forecloses discussion and rarely opens new avenues of thought. The history of thought, whether of radical, liberal, or conservative ideas, is conducted in a common linguistic discourse, and according to the rules of civil conduct, precisely in order to bridge the gap between ideas and to reach out to people in non-intrusive, non-menacing ways.

The problem in the metaphysical assumption that profanity is a source of liberation inheres in the logical equation of language and higher learning. There is not a shred of evidence to indicate that the unrestrained use of taboo words (rightly or wrongly imposed by the larger society on the individual at a particular moment in time) is an indicator of a person superior in intellect or, still less, a person capable of ethical conduct conducive to a complex society. Indeed, I am not sure that such a claim could be made even for simple societies.

The extent to which the uninhibited use of certain terms is an advantage or a disadvantage to a community or a society is determined by its explanatory powers, its ability to resolve empirical or ethical issues one must cope with on a daily basis. It might well be argued that such terms as *bullsh-t* and *mindf- - king* are so widely employed to cover a range of emotions and preferences that this search for meaning, for philosophy itself, is deadened—often permanently so. One derives the meaning of those who use such language by ignoring the curse words and seeking answers in the remaining part of the sentence or the emotive contents of the comment.

The emotive impact of terms like *bullsh-t* and *mindf- - k* has the power of weapons behind them, not the weapon of power, as both Professors Frankfurt and McGinn doubtless intended. I submit that behind the courage of low-level quotidian slang is high-level intellectual reticence, incapacity, or at least unwillingness to come to terms with fundamental issues of personal psychology and public philosophy in ways that promote the advancement of civilization as such. University presses are under competing and contradictory pressures: They are set up as paragons of quality (if not of virtue), but then demands are placed upon them to show a surplus or, more specifically, provide a profit to the university at large. In a sense, this is a new phase in the struggle first observed by Charles Homer Haskins, in *The Rise of Universities*, between the medieval inheritance and the commercial realities of modern university life.

Particularly questionable is what, if any, response can be offered to name-calling of this sort for the purpose of distinguishing bombastic carrying-on and the place of legitimate authority. This is especially the case when it comes to universities that derive their very sustenance, commercial as well as intellectual, by presuming a difference between those who know and teach and those who do not know and learn. Appeals to evidence, experience, and empirical information are grounded in more than a primitive positivist creed that to state a preference is simply to put forth a bias. Wittgenstein has often (and wrongly) been charged with offering a solipsist agenda for the denial of a real world apart from the language that expresses its contours. These jeremiads offered by Frankfurt and McGinn only serve to rekindle a mid-20th-century argument that analytic philosophy and scientific method have happily moved beyond.

University presses that promote such titles in search of meaning would be well advised to take seriously the risk factor in becoming successful commercial-publishing agents. They may actually wake up one day to find themselves having attained fiscal success in the process of losing the aim and intent of scholarly publishing as such. When the shock value of these titles wears off, through excessive usage if not in revulsion—and that will be soon enough—the world of higher learning will be left to wander about in the lower depths, with no light in sight. As the nonacademic underworld often declares, money talks, nobody walks. ◁

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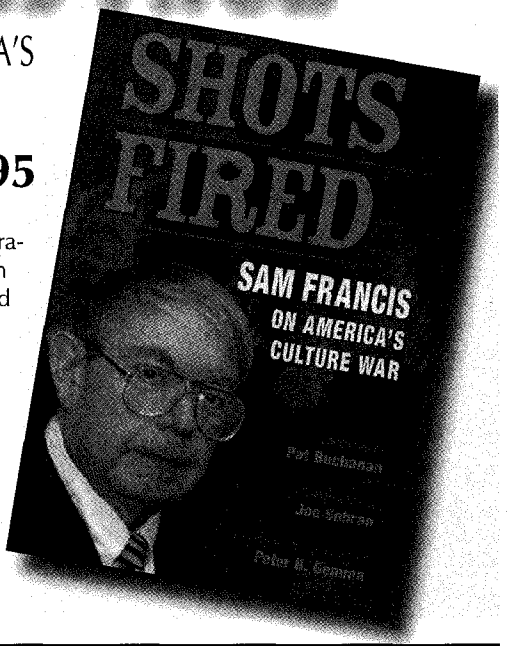

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St. Elmo's Pay

by Michael J. Ard

Empires of the Sea: The Siege of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, and the Contest for the Center of the World
by Roger Crowley
New York: Random House; 368 pp., $30.00

When news of Lepanto arrived in Rome, the Pope exclaimed, "Now Lord, you can take your servant, for my eyes have seen your salvation." The battle's outcome gratified the pontiff, but it may not have surprised him. Legend holds that, at the moment the Turkish admiral was slain on his quarterdeck, Pius V had sensed, perhaps through divine inspiration, that his fleet was victorious.

The Pope deserved a share of the credit. It was he who had cajoled the shortsighted Christian naval powers into a Holy League to check the Turkish threat. The gigantic sea battle that resulted in 1571—the last great clash of galley fleets—turned the tables on the Ottomans, who'd had things their way in the Mediterranean for over a century. The battle's results were celebrated throughout Christian Europe, and its date—October 7—remains a feast on the Catholic calendar.

In *Empires of the Sea*, Roger Crowley narrates the 50-year struggle between the Ottoman Empire and the Christian powers dominated by Spain. The book centers on two battles: the thrilling siege of Malta (1565) and the great clash at Lepanto. Along the way, Crowley relates the many reverses for Christian arms during the period, including the losses of Rhodes and Cyprus to the sultan's armies. Crowley, an amateur historian, achieves his purpose of restoring these battles to their proper place in the ongoing clash of civilizations.

At the dawn of its golden age, the Spanish Empire was conquering the New World but under assault in the old. Muslim corsairs plundered its unguarded coasts. The great pirate Barbarossa carried off into slavery thousands of Charles V's subjects from Habsburg lands in Italy and Spain. These daring raiders worked directly for the Ottoman sultan, whose power extended from the Bosporus to the Straits of Gibraltar.

When the Muslim corsairs started venturing into the Atlantic, the Spanish decided to act. But catastrophic setbacks along the Barbary Coast debilitated their naval might. The Ottomans appeared to have nothing in their way—nothing except some scattered outposts in the central and eastern Mediterranean, which still remained in Christian hands. When the Knights Hospitaller, based out of the sandstone island of Malta, captured a large merchantman owned by the sultan's chief eunuch, the decision in Istanbul was made: The Hospitallers must be destroyed.

Suleiman the Magnificent, like other Ottoman sultans, regarded himself as a new caesar. Conquest drove his rule. To legitimize his reign—all sultans lived in fear of palace revolts led by their kin—he had to capture new territory. And so he sent a great armada to Malta, whose capture would lay open Sicily, and even Rome, to be taken for the Dar-al-Islam.

Five hundred knights fortified tiny Malta and stood in Suleiman's way. The Hospitallers were granted a home on Malta by Charles V after a young Suleiman had forcibly evicted them from Rhodes. There they established a naval base and, with their sleek galleys, assaulted Ottoman shipping. Now in 1566, an older but wiser Suleiman would eliminate these Christian corsairs for good.

The Knights Hospitaller were throwbacks to the days of Richard the Lionhearted—crusaders in an age when chivalry had all but expired. (Cervantes fought with them at Lepanto.) Of noble birth, they came from all parts of Western Europe to take monastic vows and dedicate their lives to fighting Muslims. Their grand master was Jean Parisot de la Valette, a devout warrior who fought at Rhodes and had once been a galley slave. He had restored their moral discipline and prepared them for the inevitable clash with Suleiman.

Contemporary witnesses estimate that 40,000 soldiers and sailors of the Ottoman Empire with siege artillery landed on Malta to face the knights and some 7,000 Spanish, Italian, and Maltese troops. Their main challenge was to level the Hospitallers' three main fortifications guarding the great harbor. Needing a safe haven for the sultan's expensive fleet, the Turk commanders decided to reduce the smallest fort, St. Elmo, which their spies estimated would fall in a few days.

Valette made a fateful decision: He would defend St. Elmo rather than withdraw his precious forces into the more powerful fortresses across the bay. He would make the Turks pay for every foot of Maltese soil.

And pay they did. Even though the fort was reduced to rubble by Turkish cannon, and its outer works taken, the small garrison of knights and troops held on. Turkish losses piled up, even from the sultan's beloved Janissary corps. The struggle mixed the medieval and the modern: The combatants fought with swords and pikes, cannon and incendiaries, even using primitive flamethrowers. Nightly, Valette ferried more volunteers and supplies across the bay.

After holding out for weeks, St. Elmo's garrison, nearly all of them wounded, finally fell. The Hospitaller commanders, too weak to stand, accepted the assault seated in chairs, broadswords in hand. The enraged Ottomans slaughtered nearly all survivors, even crucifying some of the knights' corpses. After witnessing this atrocity, Valette executed his Muslim captives and cannonaded the Turkish camp with their severed heads.

St. Elmo would be the Turks' only gain. They battered the knights' chief strongholds with cannon but failed to overwhelm the depleted garrison. Finally, in the siege's fifth month, a long-promised relief force from Sicily arrived and routed the demoralized Turkish army. Against long odds, Valette and his few troops had prevailed in one of the greatest sieges in history.

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Remarkably, Suleiman recovered from this setback and planned another invasion. He would not live to see it. It was left to his successor, Selim, to continue the fight against the Christian presence in the Mediterranean. Selim's troops attacked the nearby island of Cyprus and tortured to death the gallant Venetian commander who defended the town of Famagusta. News of Cyprus' fall shook Southern Europe and aided the Pope in forming the Holy League to counter the threat.

With foresight, Philip II of Spain chose his half-brother Don Juan of Austria to command the combined fleet of Spain, Venice, and the Papal States. A man of ability and ambition, Don Juan had just suppressed a Muslim revolt in Spain. Although no naval commander, he knew how to fight. Like a Renaissance Eisenhower, he successfully marshaled jealous commanders of several nations into an effective fighting force.

Understanding that inactivity would kill the coalition, Don Juan moved his fleet of 200 galleys and larger ships known as galleasses into Greek waters to meet the Turkish fleet. The vast fleets met off the Greek coast not far from where Octavius, nearly 1,500 years before, defeated the galleys of Antony and Cleopatra and decided the fate of the ancient world. Don Juan moved his galleasses into a skirmish line ahead of his galleys, so they could break up the Turkish fleet with broadsides—a tactical innovation that presaged the age of fighting sail. The Christian cannons shattered Turkish galleys and broke up their attacking front. Then the galley fleets closed, Don Juan aiming his galley directly at that of the Turkish pasha.

Lepanto may have been the most costly sea battle in history. Nearly 40,000 men were slain or drowned. The Christians broke the Turkish fleet, and a soldier brought Don Juan the pasha's head in a dish.

Voltaire once said that nothing is more well known than the siege of Malta, but today Malta and Lepanto are all but unknown. Crowley, noting that these events have been downplayed by mainstream historians, sets the story straight. Aficionados of the Malta siege will appreciate his new research on the fortifications, which greatly aids understanding of the battle. Crowley's revisionist instincts fail him only in his cursory treatment of the Christian commanders, who, like Sun Tzu's ideal general, respected and cultivated the moral law, and adhered to proper methods and discipline. Had the Turk leaders understood these two formidable men, they might have heeded the Chinese philosopher's implied advice: Do not fight such leaders!

Michael J. Ard is the author of An Eternal Struggle: How the National Action Party Transformed Mexican Politics *(Praeger, 2003). He writes from Leesburg, Virginia.*

What God Has Joined

by Fr. Michael P. Orsi

Descartes' Bones: A Skeletal History of the Conflict Between Faith and Reason
by Russell Shorto
New York: Doubleday; 253 pp., $26.00

Seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) believed that God moderates reason. That is to say, faith prevents man from falling deeply into error. Yet the writing of this brilliant man of faith—in particular, his *Discourse on Method* (1637)—has encouraged a separation of faith and reason that has tended to divide human beings from the very God on Whose protection they depend. It has also separated us from our fellow man, and, in a very real sense, created a certain psychological division within ourselves that is characteristic of modern life. Russell Shorto, a writer for the *New York Times*, realizes that faith and reason are both essential components of healthy human existence. In *Descartes' Bones: A Skeletal History of the Conflict Between Faith and Reason*, he takes on the challenging task of reversing this Cartesian dualism.

The motif that runs throughout the book is that of the relocation of the philosopher's mortal remains. Shorto uses this peregrination to demonstrate the effect of Descartes' thoughts throughout the centuries. It is most effective in showing how his famous "*Cogito, ergo sum*" ("I think, therefore I am") effectively moved the traditional locus of reality and truth from outside of man (that is, from the transcendent Other), to within man himself. Shorto relates how this new outlook threatened the sacramental system of the Church and reduced the influence of theology, causing the Church to lose Her hegemony over society.

Ample credit is given to the importance of Descartes' inductive method in laying the foundation of modern scholarship, especially in the areas of medicine, technology, and even political science. But Shorto is aware of the moral alienation that has resulted from the scientific determinism inherent in Descartes' thinking. It found political expression in the French Revolution; propagated a procession of pseudosciences, including the 19th-century craze for phrenology, which held that the size of a skull and its protuberances could determine intelligence and predict criminality; and provides the basis for the materialist philosophy prevalent today.

Shorto attempts nothing less than the reconnection of man to the metaphysical aspects of his being, relating Descartes' bones to the idea of relics, usually bone fragments or other objects associated with saints, which help us to keep in touch with those holy men and women who have gone before. Yet the veneration of relics reflects a porous view of reality whereby heaven and earth are in constant communication. Shorto's adaptation of the practice reflects a very different perspective, one that is essentially earthbound. The "relics" of Descartes speak of a more insular mystery—that

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of man himself.

While Shorto does believe there is more to man than biology (materiality), this "more" doesn't seem to have any supernatural source. He promotes Descartes' view of human emotion as the glue that binds the breach between faith and reason. However, this premise reduces religion to little more than sentimentality. And that is a concept which has been condemned by the Church as modernism, a heresy that rejects supernatural revelation and reduces religion to psychologically induced emotionalism or mere neural activity.

Shorto contends that the mystery of humanity can be unveiled in face-to-face dialogue. (In fact, he sees the human face itself as the revelatory vehicle of both reason and emotion.) Yet, while no one can deny that dialogue is a starting point for insight and healing, personal encounter alone is not sufficient to overcome the differences between the conflicting paradigms of truth that separate the scientific camp from the various traditions of religious faith. Differences in fundamental beliefs are not easily bridged, as the split between Islam and the West, and the divide between pro-life and pro-choice views, readily attest.

The ultimate answers must come from a source that is bigger than either biology or emotion, and is not limited by manufactured intellectual constructs. However, being open to those answers requires a proper understanding of—and belief in—God. And belief requires humility, which is a gift of all true religion and presumes a respect for the dignity of man that comes from a source outside of man.

This book is clever, informative, and insightful, yet it must be read with care. For in the end, Shorto does not unite what Descartes has separated. He merely promotes secular humanism.

Fr. Michael P. Orsi is chaplain and research fellow at Ave Maria School of Law in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The Way of the World

by H.A. Scott Trask

Ghost Train to the Eastern Star: On the Tracks of the Great Railway Bazaar
by Paul Theroux
Boston: Houghton Mifflin; 496 pp., $28.00

In his essay on "self-reliance," Emerson wrote that "travelling is a fool's paradise." He was referring to those who travel to escape the boredom or sadness of their lives, and who hope to return home somehow transformed. Yet we may add those who travel to boast ("Look, here I am at the Parthenon!" or "I kayaked off Antarctica!"), and those who hope to experience, if only temporarily, a state of bliss, as indicated by the demand for luxurious accommodations. Such vain quests are characteristic of the pampered tourist rather than the adventurous traveler. Travelers don't know where they're going, while tourists don't know where they've been.

In all of his travel writing, Paul Theroux has never shrunk from telling it as it is. This is what makes his writing so valuable, so essential. Few tourists would wish to observe his rules of travel: Go alone, go cheap, stay on the ground, be patient, avoid luxury, leave all electronics behind. Yet it is only by following them that one learns anything about the world, or has anything to write about or tell about afterward. "Luxury spoils and infantilizes you and prevents you from knowing the world. That is its purpose."

In *Ghost Train*, Theroux retraces his 1973 trip—as recounted in *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975), his first travel book—by train through Asia *via* the Orient Express, and back *via* the Trans-Siberian. His only significant deviation is a northern detour around Iran and Afghanistan, which takes him through the southern Caucasus and former Soviet Central Asia.

This is Theroux's best, most philosophical work. The motif of change, of relentless transformation as a natural law, suffuses this book and gives it a meditative and slightly mystical air. "It is only with age that you acquire the gift to evaluate decay, the epiphany of Wordsworth . . . nothing is perfect, nothing is complete, nothing lasts." Travel "gives you glimpses of the past and the future, your own and other people's." What he sees is a world that, on balance, is getting worse, despite (or is it because of?) progress, development, globalization.

> Most people on earth are poor. Most places on earth are blighted and nothing will stop the blight getting worse. . . . [T]here are too many people and an enormous number of them spend their hungry days thinking about America as the Mother Ship. . . . Most of the world is worsening, shrinking to a ball of bungled desolation. Only the old can really see how gracelessly the world is aging and all that we have lost. . . . No one on earth is well governed.

Theroux does not exempt from this judgment the United States, which he views as something of a paradise lost. What bothers him is "the disposable dreariness of American architecture," the increased crowding, the erosion of privacy, and, above all, the loss of space. "[It] was the way of the world. The population . . . has doubled in my lifetime, and the old simple world I had known as a boy was gone."

Everyone he meets on his journey wants to move to America, or Canada, or the western fringe of Europe. In Eastern Europe, "the great wish was to travel west, to leave home." Rumanians are on the move, "furnishing western Europe with factory workers, hookers, and car thieves." In Georgia, the young and educated all want to flee to America. The same is true of Azerbaijan, despite its oil wealth and abundance of jobs. Theroux is taken aback by a young and well-employed Azeri patriot, who, after praising the beauty and glory of his country, an-

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nounces, "I'm going to Canada." Theroux also puzzles over an Uzbek he met who "seemed to dislike America, but he badly wanted to go to America." He finds this a common attitude among Muslims. Even in Vietnam, a beautiful country whose people Theroux finds self-confident and prosperous, there is a crowd lined up at the American consulate in Saigon "waiting for visas." Hanoi may be a "kind of Asiatic Paris," but the young still "want to go to America."

Everywhere, it seems, "the world of settled people had evolved into a world of people wishing to emigrate." That, of course, is a problem, and not only for the developing world, which cannot afford to lose its most talented and best-educated citizens; it is a problem for us, too. (Even worse, such countries as India and China *can* afford to lose their teeming surplus of younger people.) Theroux finds the universal and foremost motivation for migration to be economic. Whether people are destitute or reasonably well off, they calculate that they can dramatically and instantaneously improve their standard of living simply by moving west, so why stay where they are? I suspect that the image of a sensual paradise projected by film and television is another, possibly more powerful, draw. Who would not want to live in the land of wish and dream? Regardless, the demographic pressure upon the western lands seems certain to increase.

Like Tom Jefferson and Ed Abbey, Theroux hates cities—"I think of them generally as snake pits, places to escape from"—but he loves wilderness and openness as well as unspoiled places, which are vanishing. Some places he visits are being preserved only by violence (*e.g.*, Sri Lanka, which is bedeviled by the Tamil Tigers) or brutal repression (Myanmar), and in such places, the citizens are impoverished. Yet wherever there is development, there is exploitation (of man and nature) and overpopulation. Despite India's boast that "we are modern now," there are 400 million of her people living in poverty. Indian employers refused to tell Theroux how much they pay their employees. He discovers that low-level tailors earn a mere $1,000 per year; entry-level call-center workers, as little as $2,500. Yet meager salaries, made possible by an inexhaustible labor pool (much of it well educated), are what drive the Indian economy:

> the half-billion people earning a dollar a day are producing India's food surplus; the sweatshop factory workers are the backbone of its textile industry; and low-paid employees are the workforce of its high-tech sector.

He notes the paradox: "India's poor were its wealth."

Indians wanted him to be dazzled by the new Bangalore ("like Silicon Valley!"), but he is "more horrified than awed." Because of the frenetic construction, "the whole place smoldered in the foul dusty air of a building site." He has difficulty even crossing the street through the throng of people. All the cities are choked with people and traffic. In Chennai (formerly Madras, a city of two million metastasized into a "sprawl of eleven million"), he makes the mistake of trying to walk instead of taking a taxi, and soon repents of his error. The "mobbed streets" are "unendurable, pure horror," the exploding cities "nightmarish in new ways."

China, too. Kunming, "a small habitable city I had once visited," has become "an ugly sprawl of . . . four million." It is a microcosm of the new China, "ugly and soulless." He decides to fly to Japan, "reveling in the thought that I was done with China—its factory blighted landscape, its unbreathable air, . . . its honking horn capitalists."

In Tokyo, he glimpses what could be our dystopic future. It is a regimented city in which everything works, and "the worst social problems were solved," but there is little freedom, "an almost robotic obedience, decorum, rigidity, order with no thrills, a scaling down of space, . . . the virtual abolition of private cars, an intimidating police presence." "The price to be paid for success in the future was surrendering space and privacy." Is there no hope, then? There is always hope. Robinson Jeffers points to the mountains, Theroux to the next journey (he is planning to travel through Scandinavia), the Christian to the *Terra Nova*.

Herbert Arthur Scott Trask is an historian who lives and writes in the Missouri River hill country west of St. Louis.

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by Aaron D. Wolf

A Pearl and Some Swine

It's Lent, so naturally I'm thinking about Barack Obama. Well, specifically, about his inauguration. You remember, don't you—the day that hope became sight?

I don't want to be overdramatic, but it now seems obvious to me that President Obama's inauguration explains just about everything that's wrong with Christian churches in America.

And really, this has little to do with Obama and everything to do with his choice for the inaugural invocation, "America's Pastor" Rick Warren.

The day after the prayer in question was uttered, I declaimed at length on the *Chronicles* website about Rick Warren's syncretism. The god to whom he prayed had a dash of Christian, a sprinkle of Muslim, and a schtick'l of Jewish. The Word Who became flesh was referred to simply as the "one who changed my life," and that *one* was called by Hebrew, Arabic, Mexican, and English names, in that order.

A number of Christian critics of the prayer agreed with me, at least up to a point. *But*, said they, *at least he ended it on a distinctively Christian note!* Yes, it is true, Warren closed the inaugural invocation by leading the citizens of earth in the Lord's Prayer, "Yeshua, Isa, Hey-zeus, Jesus, who taught us to pray, 'Our Father . . . '"

And that's the greatest horror of it all, especially if we think about this along with the Church Fathers—Saint Augustine in particular.

The season of Lent evolved around the great tradition of baptizing converts at the Easter Vigil, the beginning of Pascha, the Feast of the Resurrection. As the original "Forty Days of Purpose," Lent was a time of preparation for the catechumenate, who were subjected to rigorous discipline, examination, and instruction. In fact, you weren't even allowed to be called a catechumen ("instructed") until you had demonstrated that you had ceased to practice the gross outward sins of pagan idolatry and adultery. Before that, you were just an "inquirer," a "listener" (*audientes*). It wasn't very seeker sensitive.

What about church? There were no popular songs designed to appeal just to the catechumen, no dramas, no overhead projectors—all had to be memorized. And there was even . . . segregation! The catechumen could go to church along with the faithful, but he was only allowed to participate in half of the service, before he was kicked out and the doors, *the doors* were manned. Why? The ancient Liturgy of Saint James, celebrated at Jerusalem at least as far back as the fourth century, explains it fairly well in one simple line: "Holy things for the holy people." (Response: "One is holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ . . . ") The unwashed catechumens are not holy, and so they cannot partake of or even look upon the holy things—the Body and Blood of Jesus. So they are dismissed before the Service of the Faithful.

(Spoiler alert, and question for Rick Warren: Were there any prayers reserved especially for the Service of the Faithful?)

Eight days before Easter, those catechumens deemed fit were elevated to the rank of the *competentes* and began to experience something that isn't a part of your average New Members Class these days—daily exorcisms. Why, you ask? Because these people believed in the Devil, that's why. And who would be the most vulnerable to satanic attacks if not the *competentes*, just days before Baptism?

On the first of the eight days, the *competentes* were given two special treasures, secrets (*Disciplina arcani*) that they were to guard with their lives: the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The first, preached Augustine, "so that you may know what to believe," and the second, "so that you may know whom to call upon."

"You see," he declared to the about-to-be-baptized, "you have begun to have God for your Father, and you will have Him so when you are born anew." The *competentes* were learning that, when a Christian prays, he is not addressing Zeus or Baal or some faraway vengeful deity, but his Father. And this is not by accident; it is the result of a special privilege, a holy sort of family planning, one in which the unworthy is united to the Son and adopted into the Father's household.

> Parents sometimes, when they have one or two or three children, fear to give birth to any more, lest they reduce the rest to beggars. But because the inheritance He promises us is such that many may possess it without anyone being put in a bind, He has called into His family the peoples of the nations; and the only Son has numberless brothers and sisters who say, "Our Father which art in Heaven, . . . "

In those times, the Church wasn't hawking a product, wasn't selling a road map for life, wasn't convinced that the customer is always right. *These pearls may not be for you.* I mean, yes, they are for you and for the "peoples of all nations," but only if you are willing to count their cost. Who wouldn't want to call God his Father? Well, you perhaps, if you are not willing to go through the Son. Holy things for the holy people; pearls are not for swine. If you are baptized, you can stay for the part of the service where we say the Lord's Prayer.

How's that for marketing?

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by Scott P. Richert

Meet Rod Blago

As the former governor of Illinois crisscrossed the country on his farewell tour, I kept imagining him lying back in his seat, scalp being massaged by his personal hairstylist (it takes work to keep that Serbian gangster hairdo in pristine shape), while an old Mac Davis song played on an endless loop on his iPod:

O Lord, it's hard to be humble
When you're perfect in every way
I can't wait to look in the mirror
'cause I get better looking each day

"Here, Bobby, hold that mirror up. I gotta work on my smile. Those gals on *The View* are gonna fall for my eyes."

And fall they did. Once Hot Rod's hand was on her knee, Whoopi Goldberg could feel his pain. A colored man just can't get a break in the white man's world.

In the end, though, it was Blagojevich who fell the hardest, but that wasn't his fault, either. Turns out that federal district attorney Patrick Fitzgerald is a regular Mr. Potter, trying to keep Milorad Bailey from helping the people of Illinois live a wonderful life. On January 23, he explained it all to WLS's Don Wade and Roma:

> You know those old black and white movies from the 30's and the 40's with Jimmy Stewart and Gary Cooper? *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *It Happened One Night* and *Meet John Doe* and the other one is *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*? How the good guy was up against the establishment, and yet they tried to make him look like he had violated rules, but he stood firm for the people because he was trying to help people in all of those movies. . . .
>
> That's what my story is. It's a Frank Capra movie.

In this 21st-century remake of *It's a Wonderful Life*, the score, of course, is also by Mac Davis.

Some folks say that I'm egotistical.
Hell, I don't even know what that means.
I guess it has something to do with the way that I
fill out my skin-tight blue jeans.

With his leather bomber jacket, those blue jeans were Governor Blagojevich's business suit. (Business casual was sweats and running shoes.) Some might find that a bit down-market for the governor of the sixth-largest state in the Union, but those jeans are the uniform of the working man, and Rod Blagojevich is nothing if not true to his roots.

That's why he voted for Ronald Reagan (twice!), he told Chicago's morning commuters, but as a working-class Democrat

> I like to see myself more as a Teddy Roosevelt kind of Republican than Richard Nixon. The guy who's fightin' for the average guy. And willing to, you know, be in the arena and have his face marred by dust and sweat and blood—strive valiantly and err and come short again and again. Because there is not effort without error and shortcoming, but who actually strives to do the deed.

With such a mastery of syntax, is it any wonder that, in conversations taped by federal investigators just days before his arrest and indictment, Governor Blagojevich still thought he might one day rise to the office then occupied by George W. Bush?

And who knows? He might have, if not for the treacherous Potter—er, Patrick—Fitzgerald. But once the arrest and the indictment came down, the Illinois House finally did the right thing and impeached the governor. At that point, he had only two choices: Return to his ancestral homeland and get lost in the mountains of Montenegro, or go down fighting.

He chose to fight, but in his own special way. Where a lesser man might actually have shown up for his impeachment trial and attempted to mount a credible defense, this son of an immigrant steel-mill worker went on every TV and radio talk show that would have him and defended himself against charges no one had leveled.

Democrats hated him because they wanted to raise taxes, and he wouldn't let them; Republicans hated him because they wanted the Democrats to raise taxes so they could campaign on the issue. Everybody hated him because he, like Mother Teresa, cared for the sick and the poor, especially children. But they were all so corrupt that they would hate Mother Teresa, too, as he revealed on the *Today Show*: "You can conceivably bring in 15 angels and 20 saints led by Mother Teresa to come in to testify to my good character, to my integrity and all the rest. It wouldn't matter." (Why a Serb would want to be defended by an Albanian was a question that, sadly, nobody asked.)

When he finally arrived in Springfield (a rare event in his two terms as governor) and deigned to make an appearance at his own impeachment trial, his long-winded defense could be summed up in two lines: "*To know me is to love me. / I must be a hell of a man.*"

Well, he was half right. So long, Hot Rod, and thanks for the nine-billion-dollar deficit. ©

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Letter From Chile

by Christie Davies

Thoughts on Pinochet and Castro

While traveling by bus in Chile in January 2008, I drew the attention of two other English-speaking passengers to a graffito, which read:

VIVA PINOCHET
LIBERTAD!

As people whose sole knowledge of the world came from the left-wing press and broadcasters, they were both shocked and puzzled that *Pinochet* and *liberty* could be linked in praise. How could a man who had been responsible for 2,000 to 3,000 deaths, caused many more to be jailed and tortured, and created the conditions whereby well over 100,000 people went into exile inspire such a tribute? Pinochet had overthrown a democratically elected socialist government by a military coup. How could he be a champion of freedom?

Shortly afterward there came a curious but decisive answer. The gaga dictator Fidel Castro resigned, though only to let his brother take over. Castro was not truly leaving voluntarily but merely going the way of Mao and Tito. Pinochet, by contrast, allowed the Chilean opposition parties to organize fully in 1987 and gave the Chileans a plebiscite in 1988 as to whether he should continue as military ruler or allow a democratic regime to take over after multiparty elections. When he lost the referendum, he resigned. Even so he had got 45 percent of the votes, which is a lot of support. He had been in office for a mere 15 years when he quit. The leftists in Chile are still complaining that the plebiscite was unfair because Pinochet had undue influence over the mass media; curiously, this objection is never made in Europe when the European Union pours in money to advertise its cause in national referenda. Like the European Union, Pinochet lost his referendum. Unlike the European Union, he accepted his defeat. Had there been any such vote in Cuba they would have made sure that 98 percent or even 105 percent of the votes would have gone for Castro. The proof that the Chileans had a fair vote is that Pinochet lost by ten percent. It is rare for dictators to cede power in this democratic way. Castro would never have dared even to put it to the test.

Today, Chile is both prosperous and democratic. Cuba is a dictatorship with an appalling human-rights record and a socialist economy that is in a shambles.

Many of the left-wing Chilean exiles have returned to Chile, and there is nothing to stop them all from doing the same. None of the more than one million Cuban political refugees has been able to go home. Even post-Castro, most will not want to because their country is in economic ruin. A Chilean can return to a free and prosperous country; it will be a long time, if ever, before Cuba is as attractive. It is worth noting that Cuban refugees very greatly outnumbered Chilean ones even though the population of Chile is 18 million, and Cuba's, only 11 million. Likewise, there were far more executions in Cuba, as well as more torture and more political prisoners. Even among Cuba's large numbers of prisoners locked up for criminal offences (there are more than twice as many as in Britain, a country with five times the population), a large proportion are incarcerated for trivial economic malpractices, such as illegal petty trading, that would not be a crime in a democratic country.

The person who wrote the graffito knew that his government had bestowed on the people the kinds of economic freedoms that are unknown in Cuba. That is why Chile is now the most prosperous and fastest-growing country in Latin America. The Chilean economy had long been in serious trouble, particularly in the 1960's, because, even before the election of Marxist President Salvador Allende, it was characterized by price controls, permits, subsidies, and a high proportion of nationalized industries. Local industries that could only survive on subsidies inefficiently produced expensive and substandard manufactured goods. Price controls on food meant that neither landowners nor farmers had any incentive to invest in agriculture. It was a recipe for failure, and it was that failure that brought Allende to power on the promise that he would intensify those very causes of failure.

Leftists used to love to call Pinochet a fascist, but his economic policies were as far from fascist as any in Latin America. On the advice of the "Chicago boys," Chileans who had studied under Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago, Pinochet's government scrapped controls and subsidies and privatized most of the economy. Friedman himself, though no supporter of dictatorship, wrote to Pinochet to advise him on economic policy. The full benefit of these policies was not felt until the mid-1980's. Pinochet's democratic successors have been the greatest beneficiaries; even their enhanced welfare spending is based on the strong and free economic institutions they inherited. If anyone can complain, it is the old oligarchy of state-subsidized businessmen who went bankrupt when competition hit.

When Friedman was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics, radicals tried to disrupt the ceremony in Stockholm because they hated the advice that he and his former students had given the Pinochet government. It was proof that they had no serious interest in the economic progress of poor countries but merely loved to indulge in slogans and gestures. The Nobel laureate who should have been booed was the ideologue

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Gunnar Myrdal. Many people live in poverty today because of his economic policies, yet he received nothing but plaudits. Similarly, leftists have praised the "visionary" Samuel Beer, Allende's British economic advisor who connected Chile's factories by telex to a computer in a central operations room to allow central planning in real time. This was a recipe for economic disaster.

Our Chilean graffiti artist well knew that if Allende had not been ousted, his country would have slid into the hell of Cuban-style communism. Pinochet's coup happened in 1973 when Brezhnev's Soviet Union was powerful, confident, and expanding. It happened just before another military coup, the one that, in 1974, established a Marxist totalitarian regime in Ethiopia, which was propped up by Cuban troops. The Soviets provided aid to Cuba in exchange for Cuban mercenaries to Africa. One way or another Castro was responsible for the death of several hundred thousand people. Curiously, the same progressives who railed so vociferously against Pinochet had little to say about Ethiopia and even less about Cuban involvement there. A war was on, remember, and it was not always a Cold War.

Supporters of the Marxist Allende claim that we cannot be sure that a communist revolution would have happened in Chile. Certainty is not necessary. Communism is so evil that even a substantial risk of such a regime taking over would have justified a military coup. Wouldn't the world have been a better place if the German army had seized power from a more or less democratically elected Hitler in 1933-34, at a time when the future horrors of Nazism were mere possibilities?

Then again, Allende's democratic credentials were not very good. He had not been elected outright. He garnered 36 percent of the vote in a three-way race, with the conservative candidate getting 35 percent and the centrist Christian Democrat, 28 percent. Allende was then made president by the Chilean parliament, but only on condition that he behave constitutionally. He did not. The parliament would censure Allende, including a particularly strong condemnation, a month before Pinochet's coup, calling for his removal. The Chilean Supreme Court condemned him for failing to execute the laws of the land. It is hardly democracy when a president who had only squeaked into office defies and overrides the constitutional rights of the other branches of government.

Many of Allende's illegalities were carried out by his wilder supporters on the Marxist left who formed "workers' militias" to seize factories and land. The more disciplined Communist Party was horrified because it was playing the longer game of gradual Soviet takeover and knew that such overt activities might provoke a coup. Many Chileans desperately wanted the military to step in. When the troops marched in a public parade, women would throw chicken feed in the street to underscore the military's cowardice; 60,000 truck owners went on strike and had the support of other small businessmen and professionals. Perhaps Washington provided the strikers with financial aid, but this is no more shocking than left-wing countries providing "fraternal support" to labor unions striking in Europe. The CIA files on Chile, now open for inspection, show that the agency disfavored instigating a coup, believing that Allende's grossly unconstitutional behavior was going to provoke one anyway, since the Chilean army was the guardian of the constitution. Pinochet's former aide-de-camp recently told a British researcher, "We had the most professional army in South America. Why would we need the help of the CIA?" Chile was already a divided country, and Allende illegally used his presidency to exacerbate those divisions and to encourage and permit others to do so. His opponents were unarmed, so instead of plotting a revolution they called for a coup. It was not a sudden plot hatched by a discontented military.

Critics of the coup confuse, often deliberately, two quite different questions. First, was the coup morally justified? (Yes.) Second, was the degree of brutality used to implement it necessary? (Probably not.) It is legitimate and necessary to use violence to prevent tyranny and chaos, but it is also incumbent upon the liberator to use the minimum amount of force required. The rules of what constitutes a just war apply to coups. You can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs, but it is a sin to waste them. The Anglo-American war with Nazi Germany was a just cause, but it is very difficult to justify the terror-bombing of German cities in 1942-45 by the RAF and the USAF. But that is not what the leftists are saying. They are citing the mere existence of casualties to argue that Pinochet should not have acted at all, which would have allowed them and their friends to take over and kill far more people. Under the red banner everything is permitted, although for propaganda purposes it may not be admitted. How many people know that far, far more Ethiopians lost their lives when the Reds took over in the 1970's than Chileans died during Pinochet's coup? Mengistu, the communist dictator, was convicted of genocide in Ethiopia after his fall in 1991 but fled to his friend and fellow murderer Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, who refused to extradite him. Did "progressive" countries pressure Mugabe to comply with Ethiopia's request for Mengistu's extradition? No, they were too busy illicitly attempting to put Pinochet on trial in European countries such as Spain or Belgium that had no jurisdiction over matters that had taken place in Chile. Were there street protests outside the Zimbabwean embassies by those who mendaciously scream "genocide!" at any Western country involved in an armed conflict? No. Few Western leaders publicly expressed support for Pinochet when he was illegally arrested in London at the request of a malicious Spanish magistrate in 1998. Apart from Prime Minister Thatcher and Chancellor Lord Norman Lamont, both of whom were indebted to Pinochet for Chile's aid in helping to free the British inhabit-

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ants of the Falklands from Argentine invasion and tyranny, only the Polish statesman Michal Kaminski stood by him. Kaminski defiantly went to London, where Pinochet was held under house arrest by Britain's socialist government, and awarded Pinochet the Breastplate of Our Lady. The gallant Kaminski knew full well the nature of the kind of communist rule from which Pinochet had saved Chile.

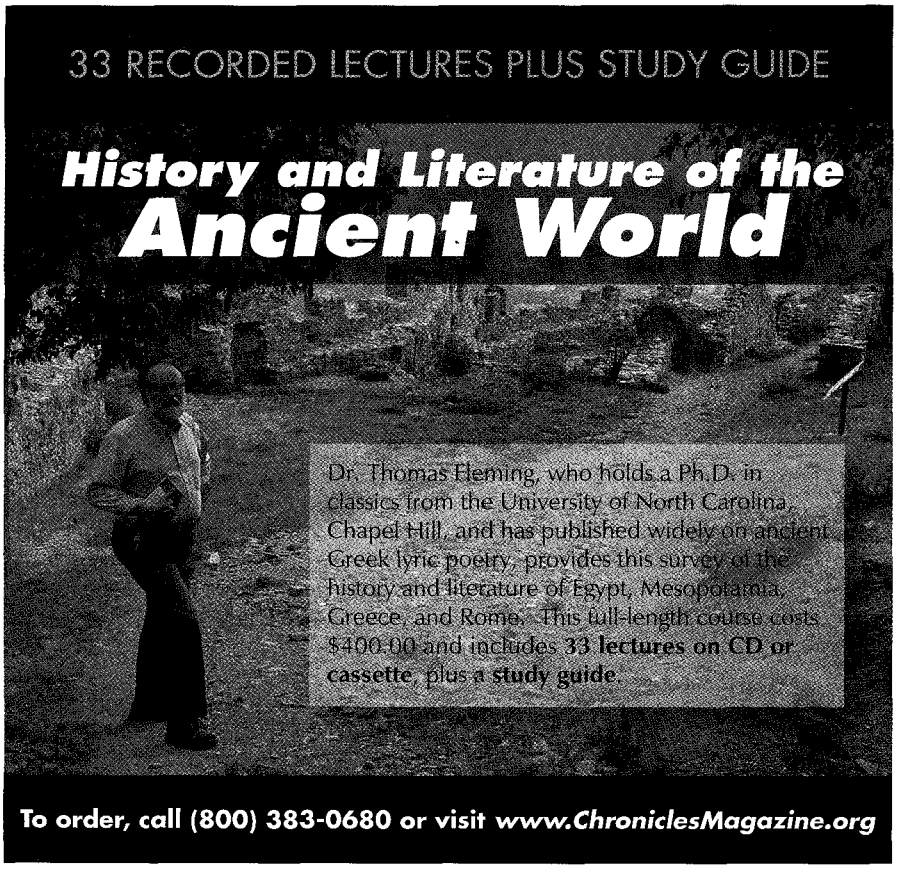
Leftists will doubtless protest that I am using a utilitarian, end-means, cost-benefit argument to compare Pinochet's Chile with Castro's Cuba by pointing out that Pinochet's regime was less brutal than Castro's, achieved more benefits for the people, and eventually enabled a smooth return to democracy. How dare I reduce their issue of grand slogans, posturing, and images to sordid questions about the welfare of ordinary people! How can I possibly denigrate the revolutionary fervor of the brutal executioner Che Guevara that has led radical students everywhere to put his visage on their T-shirts?

Yet in the days of Cuba's twilight the radicals themselves have been forced to reach for utilitarian arguments; they merely happen to be wrong on the facts. When confronted with the deplorable lack of human rights in Cuba, the leftists simply appeal to statistics that suggest that Cubans have good healthcare and live longer. Yet those same statistics do not indicate any significant difference in longevity between Chileans and Cubans. Besides, you can easily check on whether the Chileans are telling the truth, whereas our information about Cuba is based on dubious government data, the testimony of such "useful idiots" as Michael Moore, and brief visits by foreign doctors to Potemkin hospitals. Medical treatment for the elite and for tourists with hard currency is good, and it is even exported to Venezuela in exchange for oil, but as undercover medical anthropologists have reported, ordinary Cubans fare differently. Even the most basic drugs are unavailable, though, of course, there is plenty of money for the instruments of repression. It was like that in Gorbachev's Soviet Union, where I had the misfortune to be felled by bronchitis and had to return to Britain for treatment. The Soviet doctor prescribed for me an obsolete drug that the pharmacists did not have anyway. Despite my protests that I had lifelong perfect eyesight, she then sent me to have my eyes tested, since they had not run out of eye charts. Then the French-speaking optician discovered that she had no eye chart in the Latin alphabet, only ones in Cyrillic. After rummaging around, she felt compelled to make me describe (in French) the shapes on a chart designed for "illiterate Gypsies." Illiteracy under socialism? Whatever next? Likewise Cuba's seemingly low incidence of infant mortality is based in part on a deliberate failure to record deaths in the first couple of days after birth as well as a high incidence of late abortion. The weaker babies are never born. In 2000 a doctor, Oscar Elias Biscet, who protested this state of affairs was jailed for three years.

Left-wingers still mull over the unhappy events that preceded Chile's eventual success and yet refuse to condemn Castro. The Spaniards sought to persecute an old, frail, and sickly Pinochet, but Castro has been treated by Spanish doctors flown to Cuba. Even if Castro went to Spain or came to Britain for treatment, no action would be taken against him. When Castro dies, they will mourn him and speak of his "achievements." Likewise, leftists have always been quick to condemn anyone taking a vacation in a country burdened by an unfashionable "right-wing" regime, but it never seems to occur to them that taking a holiday in Cuba and enjoying the sex tourism (which, on that egalitarian isle, caters to both women and men) is helping to prop up a despicable regime with foreign currency. How can you argue with bigots so fiercely committed to double standards?

Better to boycott Cuba altogether and go hiking in Chile *libre*.

Christie Davies has traveled in almost every Latin American country—most recently, in Chile—and has also visited Ethiopia. Another version of this article appeared in the Summer 2008 number of The Salisbury Review.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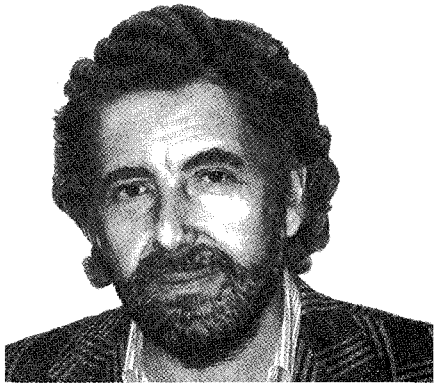
by Andrei Navrozov

The Ulema and I



On the flight to Bombay—which a British single mother with an addiction to horse tranquilizers, or a benefits administrator dispensing them, would call Mumbai—I came across a *Times of India* news report entitled "6,000 Ulema back fatwa on Terror." I recalled that the first time I heard the word *fatwa* was in connection with Salman Rushdie's blasphemy, a publicity trick not unlike Christopher Hitchens'.

I discovered that the *ulema* were Islamic scholars, who had come together at a conference in Hyderabad to endorse "a fatwa that declares that all forms of terrorism are against the spirit of Islam." The document, known as the Hyderabad Declaration, had been drawn up by the grand mufti of Darul Uloom, Maulana Mufti Habibur Rahman, and other luminaries of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, representing "almost all schools of thought in Islam." Explaining the document's rationale, Maulana Mahmood Madani said: "Terrorism has no religion. Don't link it to Islam, Hinduism or any other faith."

On my arrival to the Taj Palace Hotel in Bombay, I scoured Western newspapers for coverage of the Hyderabad conference. There was not a word. And yet, intuitively, to a man who had chanced upon the exotic word *ulema* some hours previously, it seemed a hugely important event. Imagine 6,000 university professors coming together to condemn political correctness in academia, or 6,000 ministers of the Gospel signing a petition against abortion. Would that not make the papers?

I had come to Bombay with an old friend, the photographer Gusov, as a guest of the Taj Mahal group of hotels. Gusov was shooting a catalog for the group, culturally a tricky affair to which extremely thin Indian models, leaning on balustrades with an air of Western metropolitan unconcern, were to lend a suitable degree of marketing sophistication. I was there to observe, but also to keep my traveling companion from making a nuisance of himself. To paraphrase Bismarck, a man who screams at the waiter to get his damn fingers out of the curry has no heart, while a man who asks the stick of a girl whose name he cannot pronounce up to his room has no mind. Gusov can combine the two kinds of depravity in the span of a single luncheon engagement.

A few days after our departure for a remote atoll in the Maldives owned by the Taj, a small band of malfeasants in jeans and T-shirts got off the boat in the nearby harbor, unpacked some Kalashnikovs and explosives, and proceeded to trash the hotel and several other buildings in the city, killing 141 and wounding hundreds. The catalog Gusov had photographed was now more than a little misleading.

As of this writing, investigation of the incident in Bombay is threatening to escalate into a war between India and Pakistan, both nuclear powers, on the tenuous evidence that the malfeasants in question, called "Muslim fanatics" by the Western press, "received their training" in Pakistani Kashmir. I say tenuous, because whatever training is needed to point an automatic weapon at unarmed civilians, so long as somebody out there foots the bill for the clips, can just as easily be received in nondenominational Minnesota, Merseyside, or Minsk. Six-thousand *ulema* can't be all wrong, I reckon. Religion had nothing to do with Gusov being bombed out of a catalog.

Exactly a century ago, the wisest man of his generation, the immortal Saki, wrote of the

> feuds, springing up and flourishing apart from any basis of racial, political, religious or economic causes, as a hint perhaps to crass unseeing altruists that enmity has its place and purpose in the world.

Indeed, had my companion not grown bored of brushing his teeth with Evian, this page would have been taken up by my obituary, as persuasive an argument as any for relating the Bombay incident to religious intolerance.

"I cannot accept this application," the clerk at the Indian consulate had said to me as I was getting my visa. "It is having been filled out with an improperly blue pen."

"Look here," I protested, "every single pen by every single window in this place has got blue ink in it! Haven't you made me go through the whole rigmarole, writing out all my previous reincarnations as man, beast, and political animal, so you could catch me out as a potential terrorist? Can't you catch me out if I write with a blue pen?"

"No," he replied. "It must be a rigorously black pen."

Was this a peculiarly Indian form of madness? Only as far as the phraseology. Anybody who has trespassed on bureaucratic territory, whether in Minnesota, Merseyside, or Minsk, will agree that the absurdity of limiting the search for putative malfeasance to individuals who instinctively avoid using free ink provided to them by the government is no more specifically Hindu than the Bombay massacre is distinctively Muslim.

I decided to try a less rigorous floor. In the cavernous gloom of a superior's office, far from the teeming multitudes below, another clerk, after an examination of the Taj logotype on the contract, accepted the forms. "The Palace Hotel is a veritable landmark status of the city of Bombay," he added. "Overseas visitors will find it most comfortable there." ◁

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ANARCHOTYRANNY

Policing the Opposition

by Thomas McMahon

Over the course of its 11 years at the helm of the United Kingdom, the Labour Party has acquired a reputation for authoritarianism. However, even its harshest critics would have doubted the evidence of their senses when awaking one morning to find that an opposition MP had been arrested for releasing information that embarrassed the government. Nevertheless, Damian Green, the Conservative Party's spokesman on immigration, did indeed find his house ransacked by nine antiterror policemen, his daughter in tears, and the private correspondence of his constituents seized from the House of Commons and taken into police guardianship.

Green had been informed of a number of embarrassing facts by a civil servant in the Home Office. He learned that 5,000 illegal immigrants had been employed as security guards, and that the home secretary knew about it and had covered it up. He also found out that an illegal immigrant had been working as a janitor at the House of Commons using a fake ID. Again, this information was being withheld from the public. Green also passed on to the press a letter from the home secretary warning that the recession could lead to a rise in crime, nationalism, and racially aggravated violence.

It cannot be overstated how unprecedented this arrest is. Civil servants have been prosecuted for leaking documents in the past, but for an MP to be arrested over such a matter is absolutely unheard of. There is a venerable tradition of members of the Civil Service leaking information to opposition MPs or to the press. Although the Official Secrets Act forbids the release of information that might threaten national security, the leaking of other information is a matter of professional discipline for the Civil Service. In any case, it is certainly not illegal to receive leaked documents. In fact, it is the duty of MPs to bring such documents to the attention of the public when they are discovered. As a young MP in the 1980's, current Prime Minister Gordon Brown was surreptitiously handed documents about the Rosyth naval base where Britain's nuclear-armed submarines are serviced. He was eager to use them to attack the Conservative government of the time, and upon doing so he suffered no legal sanction. In a particularly famous example, Winston Churchill received numerous leaked documents during the late 1930's showing how poorly prepared Britain was for the possibility of war, and used them to harry the government for their negligence as the country sleepwalked into a disaster. Given these precedents, there was absolutely no chance that Green would ever be charged for leaking these documents, let alone convicted. So why was he set upon by the antiterrorism police?

It emerged that the police were looking for evidence that Green had offered "inducements" to the official, thereby hoping that his actions would cross the line into illegality. In other words, the arrest was a fishing expedition. The police arrested a member of parliament for doing his job in hopes that they would find evidence that he had broken the letter of an obscure piece of 18th-century common law.

Thus far, there has been no proof that the Labour Party influenced the decision to arrest Mr. Green. However, the decision to ask the police to investigate was made by the permanent secretary to the Home Office, Sir David Normington, a man who works intimately with the government, especially with Home Secretary Jacqui Smith. His boss, Sir Gus O'Donnell, the highest-ranking civil servant, says he was surprised that the incident occurred, and that neither the prime minister nor the home secretary was informed until after the arrest took place.

If this is so, the police acted without notifying the official who has ultimate authority over the police. Nonetheless, one has to wonder whether they were led to believe that these actions would be welcomed. As it turned out, both the head of the antiterror police who carried out the operation, AC Bob Quick, and the acting commissioner of the metropolitan police, Sir Paul Stephenson, submitted their applications for the vacant commissioner's job shortly after the arrest. Even if there wasn't any indication from the home secretary that she would approve of such a move, did they expect their political masters to look kindly upon the harassment of an opponent?

The Civil Service claimed to have called in the police because they were concerned about the potential leak of material sensitive to national security. Yet the information released by Green was not in any way a risk to the security of anyone other than the government. The outrageous claim, which was repeated by the home secretary, was this: The leaks came from a place where national-security matters were discussed, so national security was at risk. By that method of accounting, Gordon Brown would now be serving time in Her Majesty's prisons, and Churchill would have spent World War II in jail.

Under the Labour Party, the police have been encouraged to see terrorism and national security as justifications for any interference they wish to make in the lives of the citizenry. They feel they have *carte blanche* to act as they see fit whenever the magic words are uttered. They were recently forced to conduct retraining sessions for officers around the country after a host of people were arrested under antiterrorism measures for taking pictures in public. (As you can imagine, there is no law against taking pictures in public.) The par-

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ents of a certain schoolboy in South London had to complain vociferously to the local police for some time before they agreed to scrub from his record the fact that he was stopped and searched under a provision of the Terrorism Act for taking a photo of Wimbledon Station. All sense of proportion has been lost, as each arm of the state takes every opportunity to grab whatever power it can. We now have no true concept of a national emergency; the merest mention of a threat to national security, and it is now expected that an over-reaction will ensue, which, in turn, will be welcomed by the government.

Mr. Green's arrest is a national scandal, yet the police are reportedly shocked by the political fallout. Small wonder: They have become habituated to being granted license to do whatever they want. By coincidence, perhaps, Sir Ian Blair, the out-going commissioner of the Met, was serving his last day on the force when the arrest occurred. He took the opportunity to hold a press conference denouncing political interference in policing. Floors were spat upon and televisions kicked in all over the land, for Sir Ian is the most political head of the Met in its history. It was he who oversaw the force's conversion from a criminal-catching enterprise to a politically correct mediator between "communities." This same man, when confronted by a no-confidence vote by the elected representatives of the London Assembly, declared: "I have stated my position; if you have the power to remove me, go on." His boast may well have sounded the death-knell for the unelected heads of the Met. Having shown no willingness to bow to public pressure, he will no doubt have strengthened public support for the Conservative policy of the direct election of police chiefs.

Despite criticisms of the arrest by members of all parties—most passionately from a few members on the Labour benches—the government and the prime minister refused to denounce the actions of the police, hiding behind declarations that the proper procedures must be followed and shamefully implying that the complainants are attempting to interfere with police business. It is entirely indicative of the way in which Labour has taken the avoidance of responsibility as its style of governing; wherever the blame can be shifted, shift it, preferably onto the "procedures."

The waters surrounding this incident are so muddied that no clear line of responsibility can be seen. Suspicions remain that a nod and a wink set the police after the opposition and ensured they weren't stopped along the way. Equally, it is entirely possible that all of the blame lies with police incompetence and megalomania. This, itself, is a lamentable situation. The British can no longer be sure whether they are living in a police state or running afoul of the Keystone Cops.

Thomas McMahon is a writer currently based in Italy.

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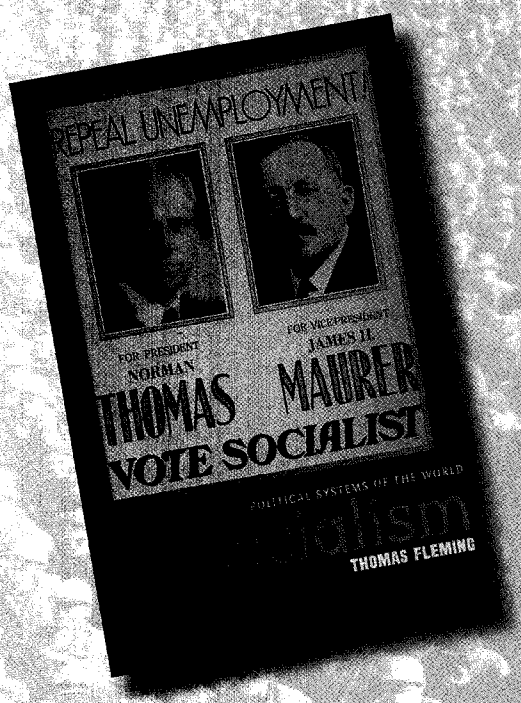

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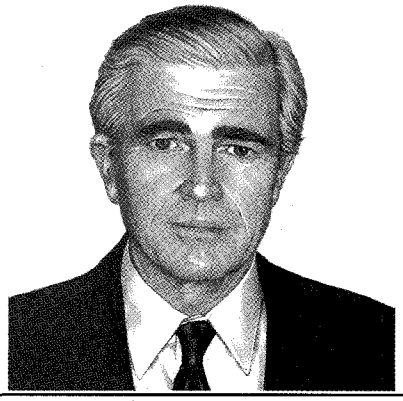

The Reader

Produced and distributed by
The Weinstein Company
Directed by Stephen Daldry
Screenplay by David Hare
from Bernhard Schlink's novel

In 2005, Miss Kate Winslet (Mrs. Sam Mendes) appeared on Ricky Gervais's *Extras* as a comedic version of herself, sporting a 1942 nun's habit on a film set. She was supposed to be playing a nun who had taken up the cause of saving Jews during World War II. At one point, Gervais's character commends her for taking on such an uncharacteristic role. She rolls her eyes and lights a cigarette. "I'm doing it," she says barely concealing her exasperation between puffs, "because I noticed if you do a film about the holocaust you're guaranteed an Oscar. I've been nominated four times. Never won. The whole world is going, 'Why hasn't Winslet won one?'" "*Schindler's* bloody *List*! *The Pianist*!" she continues contemptuously. "Oscars coming out of their arse!"

I confess I was shocked when I saw this episode. *Miss Winslet's career in America is over*, I thought at the time. Mel Brooks and Jerry Seinfeld can get away with holocaust humor, but not an Anglican playing herself playing a Roman Catholic nun. Obviously I was wrong. Miss Winslet now has her Academy Award—and not, mind you, for playing an heroic nun but rather for playing an SS guard at a Nazi concentration camp in director Stephen Daldry's adaptation of Bernhard Schlink's novel *The Reader*. Did that Seinfeld episode featuring Jerry making out with his girlfriend during *Schindler's List* change the rules? Or is it simply that *The Reader* is so deadly dull that the members of the Academy felt Miss Winslet had made sufficient amends for her earlier gaucherie?

The narrative concerns an affair in 1958 between Hanna (Winslet), a 36-year-old former Nazi guard, and Michael (David Kross), a 15-year-old schoolboy who lurches into her life when he falls sick and vomiting in the lobby of her apartment building in Bern. Taking gruff pity on the youngster, Hanna washes him off and walks him home. When he recovers six months later from what turns out to have been scarlet fever, he returns to Hanna's apartment to thank her for her kindness and shortly finds himself falling under her spell. This may have to do with Hanna leaving her bedroom door open as she changes her clothing after a day's work collecting tram tickets. (Miss Winslet's career is founded upon flashing.) Thereafter, Michael takes to lurking in her hallway. So Hanna asks him to do something more useful. She has him haul a couple of coal buckets to her apartment to heat her bath water. Having done so, Michael is covered with coal dust and needs a bath himself. Hanna obliges and, while scrubbing him down, takes the opportunity to check his equipment. Finding he's capable of something even more useful, she gets naked herself, and it's off to the races. But don't misunderstand. This is a serious holocaust film, and, well, a certain amount of naked candor is in keeping with the genre's tradition. Didn't Sidney Lumet show us women's breasts on camera in *The Pawnbroker* without causing a police riot in 1964?

Hanna and Michael fall into a routine. He shows up daily with his school books. They bathe together—being German, Hanna is big on cleanliness—and then, at Hanna's insistence, Michael reads to her from whatever books he has at hand. After the demands of cleanliness and culture have been met, they couple like mad into the sweaty evening. This goes on satisfactorily for several months, but when Michael begins to press Hanna to tell him more about herself, she abruptly disappears. He is, of course, devastated. Then eight years later he sees her again. He's now a law student, and his teacher has taken him and the rest of his class to court to observe former Nazi prison guards being tried for human-rights crimes. Hanna is one of the women on trial. During the proceedings, it emerges that Hanna had worked at an Auschwitz satellite camp in Poland. Among other things, she had been put in charge of selecting which women were going to be sent to their deaths at Auschwitz proper when new prisoners arrived at the satellite. From these selected groups, she had picked those who were literate to read to her in the days before their departure. She is said to have given them comfort in the meantime, leading them to believe she was genuinely interested in their welfare. Others say she was only using them. Whatever the truth, Michael looks on in mute horror at the woman he had once loved. How could she have done these things? This is the crux of Schlink's narrative, which Daldry's film truncates irresponsibly.

In the novel, Schlink's point is that Hanna is being personally scapegoated for crimes that many others participated in, whether actively or passively. To prosecute her without admitting this is to perpetuate the nation's guilt and ramify its bitter consequences. The novel fully dramatizes the wholly unwarranted self-righteousness of the other young German law students as they observe the trial. They take it as an occasion to despise the older gen-

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eration, including their parents, for their complicity in the policies of the Third Reich. Michael would doubtlessly be with them but for his relationship with Hanna. As it is, he's left with the impossible burden of coming to terms with her culpability in the midst of his lingering feelings for her.

Schlink argues that vindictive moralizing avails no one. Those who went along with Nazi policies passively were certainly lacking in moral courage, and those who followed orders that entailed harming and killing people must bear their responsibility, but this should not license the younger generation to point morally superior fingers. At one point, Hanna is being questioned harshly about her role in the death of prisoners who had been locked in a church that was set afire by Allied bombs. The judge expresses contempt for her apparent decision not to unlock the doors and let the prisoners out. Looking at him in bewilderment, she haltingly explains that when the bombs began to fall, the male officers left the women guards in charge of the prisoners while they took the wounded to safety. When the church caught fire, she was confused. There was no one to give her orders. If she let the prisoners out, there would have been chaos, she pathetically explains, and besides everything was happening so quickly—people running about, screams from inside the church. Then, in evident perplexity, she asks the judge, "What would you have done?" She's not mocking him; she simply wants an answer, but he has none to offer.

Of course, with the moral clarity available after events, it's all too obvious what she should have done. Schlink's larger point is that it's also obvious what the Germans should have done about their Nazi rulers. But as Hitler rose to power and the Nazis took command of state institutions, barraging the populace with ceaseless propaganda complemented by a program of relentless civilian surveillance, what course was safely open to the ordinary individual? It's easy, Schlink implies, for those who enjoy freedom today to say their elders should have resisted. Of course they should have. So should the Russians have resisted the rise of the Bolsheviks and Stalin's police state. So should all Americans have denounced George W. Bush's criminal policies. Schlink argues that these *should haves* are only helpful in the present if applied by those who realize that they themselves may not have had the moral heroism necessary to stand up to those in power.

This brings us to the novel's weakest link. Schlink makes Hanna an illiterate, a condition that Michael only belatedly discovers while her trial is in progress. This explains why she asks others to read to her. She had hidden her illiteracy because she thought it profoundly shameful. This is why she lies on the witness stand. When the judge asks for a sample of her handwriting to determine whether she wrote an incriminating report, she says it won't be necessary since she did. She keeps her secret and seals her fate.

Schlink seems to want illiteracy to work as a metaphor for the condition of Germans generally in the first half of the 20th century. It was not that they were all illiterate, of course, but rather that so many didn't grasp what was happening to them and were thereby paralyzed when they should have acted. I don't think this device works. Schlink runs into distracting problems of verisimilitude throughout the novel. How could Hanna have functioned as a tram-ticket taker? Wouldn't the job have required her to be able to read street signs and other publicly displayed information? But it's pointless to pursue this line. Suffice it to say that Schlink wants us to perceive Hanna as a victim so that we might understand her participation in monstrous acts, perhaps including her wanton seduction of Michael.

A number of Jewish commentators have attacked Schlink's novel and Daldry's film on grounds that both seek understanding, even sympathy, for a Nazi functionary. Their anger is entirely understandable but perhaps misguided. A writer should be free to go where he wants, and here Schlink has decided to focus on the deformation of a soul. Hanna, like many of her time, had been brutalized by state authorities to believe she was carrying out legitimate policies and had neither the wit nor the courage to question them. This is certainly a legitimate subject, and, except for his clumsy use of illiteracy as metaphor, Schlink does a fair job of examining it. Daldry's film is another matter. He has spent an inordinate amount of his time recording the well-scrubbed coupling of the characters rather than dramatizing their backgrounds. We need to see more than the actors' breasts, buttocks, and genitalia to understand them. We need principally to find out what had happened to Hanna to make her the way she is. On screen, we never do. Similarly, Daldry leaves Michael's response to Hanna—beyond his obvious sexual attraction—largely unexplored. Even when Ralph Fiennes takes over as the grown-up Michael, the film leaves us in the dark about his failure to make direct contact with her after her trial. The novel has much to say about this, and it belongs in the film.

One more point. In a film that means to expose the ongoing effects of abuse, we're edified by the spectacle of a boy actually being abused by his director and his costar. What else can we call what happens to David Kross in this movie? In an interview, Miss Winslet insisted Kross was 18 during the filming and, therefore, an adult free to frisk with whomever, whether before the camera or not. Well, I suppose that's better than his character's starting point at 15, but still, is 18 the age when, for professional purposes, a boy can coolly disregard the sexual appeal of a nude 33-year-old actress pressing against his naked body? Who's kidding whom? I have to imagine that Mr. Kross's expectations regarding what might transpire on a date have been considerably elevated, a circumstance that might give a responsible father pause, should Mr. Kross want to take his daughter out in his BMW.

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

A Bittersweet Conclusion

After so many years living in exile up north, Héctor had forgotten how pleasant fall in the Chihuahuan Desert can be, the summer heat banished for good and the first snows not yet upon the desert mountains that enclose the city on three sides. From his office on the top floor of the Museo de la Revolución in the Casa Pancho Villa, he had a fine view of Ciudad de Chihuahua dominated by the three conical hills, Cerro del Coronel, Cerro Grande, and Cerro Santa Rosa, and the twin bell towers of the Catedral de San Francisco rising from the city center. This morning the mountains appeared remote through a haze of poisonous cloud rising from the smoldering garbage dumps in the barrios that ringed the city at its perimeter and mingling with the incensed smoke of piñon and juniper wood fires burning on hearths and within cookstoves across the metropolis.

Leaning above thick forearms crossed on the windowsill, Héctor surveyed his new domain with proprietary satisfaction. After three months, Chihuahua still seemed to him preferable to Albuquerque, if only on account of its historical presence and the notable absence of diversity. (In the hundred days since his arrival in the city, he'd not spotted a single turban or burqa in the streets, or anywhere.) Unlike the United States, which seemed to transform itself on a daily basis, Mexico didn't change much. Despite its substantial growth in recent times, Ciudad de Chihuahua remained in many respects the city Pancho Villa had known when he was governor of Chihuahua State and lived in this same house. From his vantage at the window, Héctor, looking down into the grassy courtyard, could see the Dodge touring car, riddled behind by .45-caliber bullets, in which The Centaur had met his end in Hidalgo del Parral more than eighty years before. Living in Chihuahua and maintaining the computer system at the Museo, he felt closer to his hero than he had even in Namiquipa. As the department of the army in the Secretariat of National Defense in Ciudad de México operated both Casa Villa and the Museo, Héctor's colleagues in his new job were almost exclusively Federales. Frequently—more frequently, indeed, than he was entirely comfortable with—the impassive looks they sent him through their flat, stonefish eyes gave him the impression of being face to face with the *villistas* themselves, for so long the scourge, as well as the hope, of the Chihuahuan people.

In spite of his growing disillusionment with America and American culture, Héctor might well not have returned with his family to Mexico had it not been for the fiasco of Ladrón Peak and the buried treasure. At Jesús "Eddie's" insistence, Beatriz had forced the truth from Hermana Carmen by threatening to report the *curandera* and her witcheries to Father Ortega, the parish priest for Our Lady of Belen. Under interrogation from Beatriz Juárez, Hermana Carmen had confessed to having extracted a fee of $1,000 from the Treasure Hunter in return for directing him to the same site she'd indicated to Héctor, only minutes before. (Every footloose ne'er-do-well, it appeared, had read that Camino Real column in the *Valencia News-Bulletin*.) Shocked by such unethical business practices, Héctor and Jesús "Eddie" together had petitioned the Chamber of Commerce for redress, but without success. Immediately following this failure, and acting on impulse, Héctor had put his house on the market and initiated a job search in Ciudad de Chihuahua. The house had sold within two weeks to a Chinese couple from Beijing and at more than double the price Héctor had paid for it, allowing him to pay cash for a handsome old home in Chihuahua in a fairly upscale neighborhood not far from Casa Villa. Ave-María, though she missed the American-style malls, seemed to be settling in nicely after finding an Assemblies of God church to her liking. Contracepción was doing as well as could be expected in a neighborhood school, despite being a year and a half behind her class, and had her first real *novio*, a nineteen-year-old aspiring *corrido* singer who wrote songs about narcos shooting police officers in cold blood. And Dubya attended preschool for three hours each morning, while his mother worked on the church's Crusade For Souls project.

Life, Héctor understood, was good for the Villas. And yet something, he sensed, was missing. The Dream that had sustained his life for more than two decades was ended, and with its passing, existence, though pleasant enough, seemed to him flat and uninspiring—essentially meaningless. Unlike in El Norte, it was not morning again in Mexico every day.

El Día de Los Muertos, coming on the first and second of November, as a welcome instance of the rich historicity of Mexican folk culture afforded him temporary cheer. But Christmas was more of a downer than usual, owing to the absence of shopping malls, reduced family circumstances (the Secretariat of Defense was hardly a generous employer), and his aged mother's insistence that he and the family spend the holidays in Namiquipa, where she reproached her son relentlessly for the remittances forfeited when the Villas moved from the U.S. back to Mexico.

Much of his restlessness, Héctor

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decided, was owing to the fact that there was so little to do in Chihuahua. When he ventured to suggest as much to his boss, el Coronel Baca had assured him that the bullring would open for the season in April. But Héctor, who had never been an aficionado of the *corrida* and had in any event developed an enthusiasm for NASCAR, was not comforted by the prospect of watching three men stab six bulls to death under a hail of *¡Olés!* or of pillows. Nevertheless, the *coronel*'s suggestion nudged his imagination. It was no good looking for Albuquerque in Ciudad de Chihuahua, he realized; *por consiguiente*, he must seek for Chihuahua in Chihuahua. With this aim in mind, he bought a local guidebook, in English, at a downtown shop frequented by American tourists and spent several evenings perusing it over a bottle or two of Corona. Among the few entries to attract his attention, or his interest, was Rocas de Aladino, a rock shop located in an historic mining town 30 kilometers northeast of the city. Héctor had always been fond of rocks since, as a boy in Namiquipa, he'd made something of a collection of the missiles that the older Montez boys down the street had used to pelt him with.

"*Mi querida*," he told his wife, "next Saturday we will all drive out from town together and visit the rock shop I was telling you about the other day."

AveMaría gave him the look she'd used to give Dubya when, at around the age of two, he'd wanted to eat dirt.

"Rocks? You want to look at rocks? Why not lumps of coal?"

"But these ones are from an historic mine! There's an old town there, and everything."

"Coal comes from mines, too," she replied.

Contracepción, who'd looked forward to spending the afternoon with the *novio* at the neighborhood theater where the latest J-Lo movie was playing, protested, but Héctor insisted that this was a family outing from which no one could be excused. The drive to Aquiles Serdán, which should have taken half an hour, instead lasted forty-five minutes when Héctor found himself stuck at the tail end of a funeral procession going 25 kilometers per hour on the narrow two-lane highway without shoulders. When at last he saw a chance to pass, he counted forty-two vehicles on his right before being forced off the road onto the hardpan by an oncoming farm truck doing at least eighty and apparently without brakes. The country was barren desert, flat as a Wal-Mart parking lot and littered with rotting cacti and snagged plastic bags. AveMaría claimed it made her so miserable just looking at it, she wanted to cry.

The old mining town of Aquiles Serdán sat a short way up a sharply narrowing cañón, facing itself across the precipitous slopes of the barren opposing hills. It was overlooked from the upper end by a decaying church of great age, built upon a bench of rock twenty or thirty feet above a row of small, dingy shops, most of them catering to the tourist trade.

"*¡No deseo ver rocas!*" Dubya whined. "*¡Más bien deseo encontrar dinosaurios!*" The boy, who'd recently developed a passion for collecting toy dinosaurs, had learned just enough geology to associate the two phenomena.

Héctor parked the Subaru at the foot of a flight of worn stone steps leading up to the level of the shops, and everyone climbed out. The town looked deserted, with the exception of two gringo tourist couples letting themselves into the church and a flock of small, predatory boys loitering at the head of the steps.

"*¡Señor, señor—venga conmigo!*" the boys shouted as soon as they saw Héctor. "*¿Desea un guía? ¡Venga, venga conmigo!*"

Héctor brushed them off impatiently, but one boy, a nice-looking, soft-spoken, and polite child, refused to take no for an answer. His father, he explained, was the proprietor of a rock shop. Would the *señor* care to come along with him and see it? Together, the Villas followed, AveMaría dragging Dubya, loud in protest, by the hand the entire way to the shop, where Héctor placed a peso in the kid's hand.

Inside, the proprietor introduced himself in a friendly way and proceeded to show Héctor his inventory. The rocks, indeed, were beautiful: rough, polished, and carved; minerals and gems; petrified wood, fossils, and geodes; carnelian, quartz and rose quartz, malachite, and blue calcite. Héctor was entranced, and so were the girls, who kept squealing at each other from various parts of the shop to come look at this! On impulse, he bought, for twelve pesos, a malachite cougar (or was it an African lioness?) for AveMaría, and a geode for himself to serve as a paperweight. The girls also were buying, placing one item after another in the plastic sacks thoughtfully provided by the proprietor. Only Dubya seemed unimpressed. Instead of wanting to buy the whole store, as was usual with him, he was nowhere to be seen—or heard.

Where, Héctor wondered suddenly, was Dubya?

In panic, the family ran outside, nearly forgetting to deposit their sacks with the proprietor. Héctor glanced swiftly around the small plaza and saw nobody. Even the gang of importunate urchins was gone. He raced to the flight of steps and looked down at the Subaru. Dubya was nowhere outside the car, and Héctor had the keys in his pocket, having taken care to lock the doors. He looked back to the line of shops, half-expecting in his confusion to see one of the Dollar Stores where dinosaurs were always to be found. But the Villas weren't in Albuquerque anymore!

Contracepción was in tears, and AveMaría nearly hysterical, when suddenly they all heard shouts punctuated by piercing screams from some distance off. Héctor, after listening with his head on one side and his hands cupped behind his ears, determined that the sounds issued from behind the church. The next instant he was flying on swift new Adidases, leaving the womenfolk panting far behind. He vaulted a low iron fence and ran on, past the doors of the church from which a pair of curious gringo faces peered, around the corner of the building and straight into the street urchins pushing, pulling, and ham-

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mering with their fists at Dubya in their midst. They scattered, squawking, like ravens as he burst upon them and fled in all directions, some into the brush on the steep hill behind the church, others up the narrowing ravine where the town trickled out in a profusion of ocotillo and mesquite. Dubya lay sprawled on the bare ground, stripped almost naked of his clothes, including his new pair of expensive sneakers. Héctor snatched up his son and clasped him to his bosom—which was how the women came at last upon the two of them, as if a wooden statue of St. Joseph With the Christ Child had come alive inside the musty church and stepped outside for a breath of fresh air.

* * *

For weeks following the horrific attack on Dubya, which Héctor was convinced had been a kidnap attempt as well as assault and robbery, the Villas kept to themselves at home. Had the drug violence in Mexico reached the point that it now involved seven- and eight-year-old kids? He put the question to el Coronel Baca, who seemed to pretend not to have heard him. Nevertheless, Héctor, fearing the worst, kept the children at home as much as possible while urging AveMaría to take extra precautions whenever she went to church or the *supermercado*.

Thus, despite the relatively warm weather, by late winter the Villa family was experiencing cabin fever worse than they ever had in the cold of central New Mexico. In New Mexico, too, there was spring break, which Contracepción's new school, at least, did not observe. In New Mexico, in March, the family had always taken a trip together.

"*¡O papaíto!*" the girl complained one night at supper, "it's not fair! I'm so bored, and I never get to go *any*-place! Pu-*lease, papaíto*, can't we go *some*-place?"

It was thus, under pressure, that Héctor had the most inspired idea of his life.

"How would you like," he asked his daughter in measured tones, "to drive to Las Vegas for a week?"

"*¡O papaíto!*"

"Héctor, do you really mean it?" AveMaría breathed.

"*¡Deseo ver los leones!*" Dubya roared. "*¡Muchos, MUCHOS leones!* What does the lion say, Papá? The lion says *RRRRRRRUUUUUUUHHHHHH*!"

And why not? Héctor asked himself. He and AveMaría had at last received their U.S. residency papers a month after returning to Mexico, so the border crossing would be a piece of cake. And even as the idea occurred to him, the Dream stepped forward in his mind once more, a Lady clothed in green and bearing aloft a flaming torch; and he understood that, where they were going, it really was morning again, every day of the year. ©

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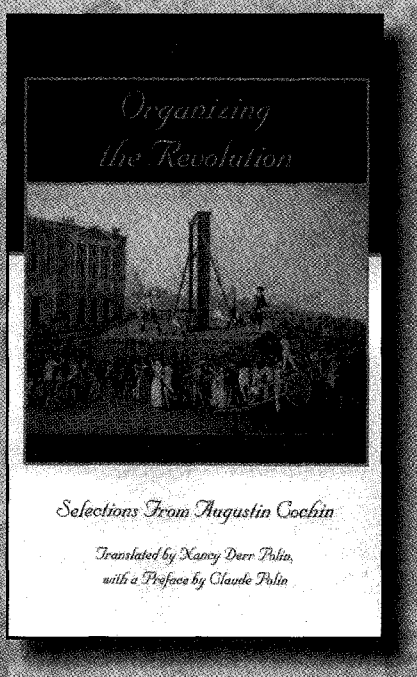
Organizing the Revolution
Selections From Augustin Cochin
Translated by Nancy Derr Polin, with a Preface by Claude Polin

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Selections From Augustin Cochin

translated by Nancy Derr Polin

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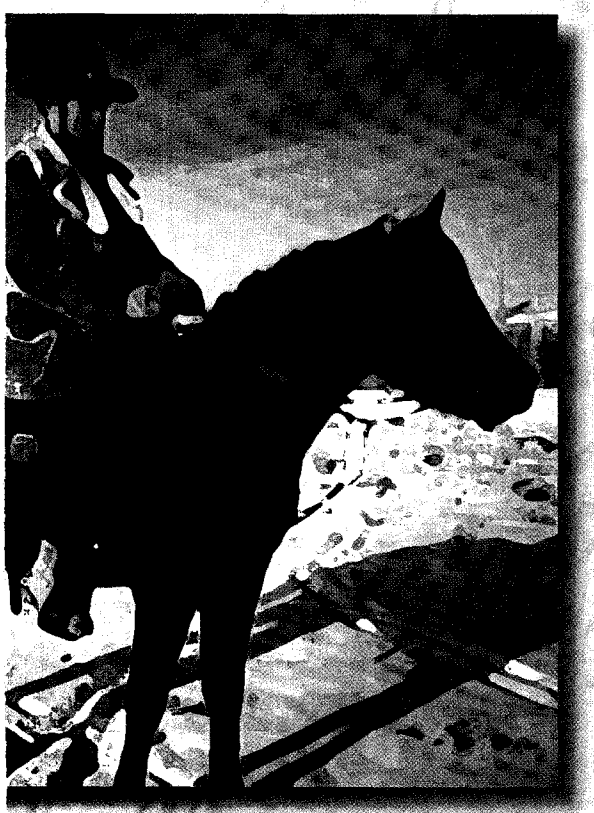

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